

THE HOTTEST
ALT GIRLS IN
ONE MAGAZINE

TY KING • SIAN MARIE • LAIKA & TEENIEBASH • AEMELIA FOX • LUNA LOUISE

ISSUE 93 • FREE



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MALICE LINGERIE
CAMILLY CLOTHING
DETH KULT
& MORE

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PULP

#93

FEATURING

COUNTERPARTS • CRADLE OF FILTH • ENTER SHIKARI • EVERY TIME I DIE • NORTHLANE • PRESS TO MECO
SOUND OF REVOLUTION 2017 • KNOCKED LOOSE • TOP 5 ALBUMS OF 2017 XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 2
TOWER 57 • SUPER LUCKY'S TALE • WOLFENSTEIN II • SINE MORA EX

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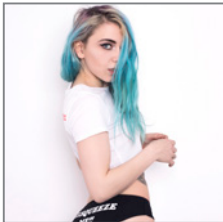
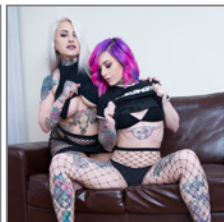
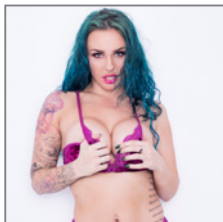
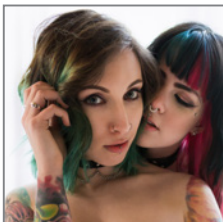
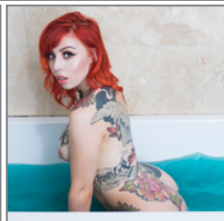


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MODEL: ROUGE SUICIDE @SHOWMEYOURTITCH



Amelia Fox

Photographer: ATOM



Hey Aemelia! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Oh hey readers! Here I am again, your crazy, 24 year old, birthday suit wearing enthusiast, back to cause more trouble!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Awesome! As always. ATOM you rule.

What was your favourite part of the shoot? How much I laughed and had a good time, obviously being naked is always fun too.

What's your favourite part of your body and why? My butt! It's grown over the years and I'm not complaining.

**ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN, HOW GOOD LOOKING ARE YOU?
THAT'S FOR YOU TO DECIDE!**



If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? I'd love to do some more for Malice Lingerie, her style is awesome.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? Amazing! Best year yet and I cannot wait for 2018!

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? I don't like ice cream...

What's your favourite song currently?
Big Shaq - Mans Not Hot... literally obsessed

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why?
Boomtown! Best festival ever.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Philippines, the most beautiful country in the world!

What do you like most about Elite?
The chief <3

Photographer: ATOM









**WHAT'S A
GUARANTEED
TURN ON FOR
YOU? PAPA
JOHNS.**

**DESCRIBE
YOUR PERFECT
PHOTOSHOOT: LOTS
OF SNACKS, GOOD
MUSIC, FRIENDLY
FACES AND SEXY
UNDERWEAR!**





**FINALLY, IS THERE
ANYTHING YOU
WOULD LIKE TO
SAY TO THE ELITE
READERS? YOU'RE
ALL AWESOME XO**







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Maddison Myers

Photographer: ATOM



Hey Maddison! Welcome to Elite, what was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? He supplied me with strawberry laces, pineapple and pizza so it was amazing. Photographer was okay too. Joking! I felt like I had a full ab workout he made me laugh so much!

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE SHOOT? EATING PIZZA NAKED
BECAUSE I WAS TOO EXCITED FOR FOOD TO PUT CLOTHES ON.**





If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? SuicideGirls. So many strong beautiful women are a part of it and it's such a big movement towards alternative beauty, I would love to be a part of that.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? It's been a crazy year for me. A lot has changed and I can't wait to see what next year brings.

What's your favourite song currently? I have a new favourite song every other day, but a song I will never get sick of is 'Disturbed - Down with the sickness.' I will never get bored of trying to sing along!

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Download! If I could buy an island and make it like a constant Download festival all summer like Ibiza is for house music, I would be all over that. But I don't have enough money and goths aren't keen on hot weather anyway.



If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Korn's Greatest Hits, is that cheating? I love Korn and all of their albums are amazing so I get a bit of everything on there.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? I don't know if I should say as I worry people might read this and try it while I'm minding my own business in the street... oh well, I might like it! A guaranteed turn on is being nibbled!

Describe your perfect photoshoot: Covered in vegan pizza or wearing expensive lingerie or both!

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Paris! I love Paris. It's not hot and I don't get sunburnt and I love the catacombs and beautiful buildings, burlesque shows and Disney land!

What do you like most about Elite? The crazy hot girls and as the Elite team is so much fun you know all the models are up for a laugh to!

Photographer: ATOM





WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR BODY AND WHY? MY BUM OF COURSE! YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH BEING A BITCH IF YOUR BUM IS GOOD ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM FORGET WHAT YOU JUST SAID AS YOU WALK AWAY!

*The soul is the same
in all living creatures,
although the body of each
is different*





On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? I don't believe in rating, everyone is so different! But I will say 10 as everyone should think nothing less of themselves. We are all perfect in our own weird way!

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Vegan Ben and Jerry's peanut butter and cookies. I go through a tub a week. It's life changing.

**FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING
YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE
ELITE READERS? THANK YOU FOR
APPRECIATING US IN ALL OUR
WEIRDNESS WE WOULDN'T BE
HERE WITH OUT YOU!**

Photographer: ATOM



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SIAN MARIE

Photographer: ATOM





Hey Sian! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hey! thanks for having me back you lovely lot, as some of you may know I'm Sian Marie, a petite tattooed redhead from the UK, I'm 25 and I'm full time mama, part time hair dresser, part time cam girl. I enjoy being naked, eating and having my photo taken.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Seriously? You still gotta ask me this..? ATOM is amazeballs and takes ahhmazin photos, he's also an awesome guy.

What was your favourite part of the shoot? Having all the laughs, pizza and also bath bombs. You know your job is awesome when you can eat pizza, be naked and have colourful baths!







**WHAT'
AND W**

A photograph of a person lying on their back on a bed. They are wearing black lace lingerie and black stockings. A large, colorful floral tattoo is visible on their right hip. The bed has a white sheet with a floral pattern. A red banner with white text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

**S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR BODY
HY? MY BUTT, JUST LOOK AT DAT PEACH!**

Photographer: ATOM





On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? 11.5.

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Creepyeha.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? It's been bloody awesome.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Chocolate.

What's your favourite song currently? Matt Corby - Monday.





If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why?
Download, never been always wanted to go!

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be?
Brand New - Science Fiction.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you?
Inner thigh kisses, hnnng.

Describe your perfect photoshoot:
This one!

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Budapest, such a beautiful country and I can't wait to visit again.

What do you like most about Elite?
The variation in models, we all look so different and it's lovely to see!

Photographer: ATOM





**FINALLY. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS?
THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME AS ALWAYS. I HAD SO MUCH FUN! LOVE YOU ALL XO**



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Photographer: Mike White

AMANDA &



R & NYMPHAE

Hi Amanda, welcome to Elite! How did you enjoy the shoot? I loved it! Had a good giggle and really enjoyed the whole day.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Amazing as always, I always love shooting with Mike. He's such a babe.

What was it like to work with Nymphae? Great. We've shot together a few times and it's always a laugh.

Photographer: Mike White

WHAT'S NYMPHAE'S BEST FEATURE? WHAT ISN'T A GOOD FEATURE? BUT SHE DOES HAVE A GREAT BUTT.







**WHAT'S A GUARANTEED TURN ON FOR YOU?
LONG HAIR AND A GREAT SMILE.**





What's your best feature?

Errr... my butt too I guess. It usually gets the most compliments.

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot?

Probably when I was looking the other way, Ellie licked my boob when I wasn't expecting it. There are some good outtakes of that.

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions?

I enjoy going to the gym and working out a lot, but also I love baking :)

So how can a guy impress you?

Just be genuine, make me laugh and be a bit of a nerd.

Who has been your favourite model of 2017?

I discovered Solita Suicide this year who I am now in love with.

What is the naughtiest thing you've done?

Well that would be telling...

Beards - Yes or No? YES!!


What's the worst idea you have ever had?

Most ideas when drunk. No, all ideas when drunk.

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite readers?

Thanks! Thanks for reading, for taking an interest and keeping this awesome magazine going!

Photographer: Mike White



Photographer: Mike White

Hi Nymphae, welcome to Elite! How did you enjoy the shoot? Yeah it was great, I get on really well with both Amanda and Mike, so it was really relaxed and comfortable - as you can tell from the photos!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? I never have any complaints about Mike, everything was great!

What was it like to work with Amanda? Well, just look at the images and I think that explains everything! ;)

What's Amanda's best feature? Hmm, that's a hard one - I think her eyes are so pretty, her boobs are also great (gotta' be honest, aye?)

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions? I've recently started Pole Fitness which I'd really like to continue, it's mega expensive but in the new year I'm thinking to do at least 2 lessons a week.

So how can a guy impress you? Well, if he could fly, that would be pretty impressive.

Who has been your favourite model of 2017? Fishball - I met her in September, and I have to say, she seems to have absolutely no flaws in looks or personality! Even her photography is great!

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? If you can sing well - ugh!

Beards - Yes or No? No thank you!

What's the worst idea you have ever had? I've had many bad ideas, hard to say haha!







WHAT'S YOUR BEST FEATURE? SOUNDS ODD, BUT CURRENTLY MY ARM - IN THESE IMAGES IT'S NOWHERE NEAR FINISHED, BUT NOW IT IS AND LOOKS AWESOME!





FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? DO AS MUCH AS YOU CAN WHEN YOU HAVE THE TIME, EVENTUALLY YOU'LL MISS THAT KIND OF FREEDOM!







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Welcome Pulp, how are you? Pretty damn splendid.

Seriously though, we're so thrilled to have you in Elite. Did you have fun shooting for us? I had SO much fun. It was such an awesome opportunity.

What is like to grace our cover for the first time? I'm tempted to ask if you want to rethink that decision. It's such an honor and I'm so happy to be a part.

What was it like to shoot with Elite? It was great! I felt so comfortable and it was by far one of the most welcoming experience and easy to get into the groove.



YOU ALWAYS SEEM SO EFFORTLESS ON CAMERA, IS IT HARD REINVENTING YOURSELF FOR NEW FEATURES? SOMETIMES. I THINK IT MORE DEPENDS ON IF I'M ABLE TO CONNECT WITH WHOMEVER I SHOOT WITH AND I ALWAYS TRY TO EXPERIMENT WITH EXPRESSIONS AND POSES. I NEVER LIKE TO FALL BACK ON THE SAME LOOKS AND SOMETIMES IT WORKS! OTHER TIMES... WELL, THANK GOD FOR OUTTAKES.







Photographer: ATOM

YOU HAVE SOME OF THE BEST BOOBS GOING! WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL FAVE BODY PART? THANKS! THEY SEEM TO BE TREATING ME WELL. WEIRDLY, MY FAVOURITE IS MY CLAVICLE. I ALWAYS LIKE COLLARBONES AND I LIKE TO THINK I HAVE A GOOD ONE!

WITH THAT IN MIND, WHICH PERSON DO YOU THINK HAS THE BEST BOOBS AT THE MOMENT? HMM DEFINITELY ERICA FETT OR RIAE. HAVE YOU SEEN THEIRS?!



So you seem to travel a lot... where has been your favourite place? It's been years since my last trip, but I loved visiting my family in Prague, Czech Republic. I've been meaning to make another trip back now that I'm older and able to take better advantage. Second place would be New York. It's so much different than Los Angeles, but it's familiar too. If that makes sense?

What are your hobbies? I'm a huge homebody. I play a lot of video games or I read a lot of film theories and dissertations. I guess something people don't know is I went to film school. I wanted to get into film critique. I don't really do that now so maybe one day I will, just for fun.



INSPIRATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, BE IT MUSIC, FILM OR BOOKS. WHAT IS INSPIRING YOU AT THE MOMENT? LATELY, I'VE BEEN FINDING INSPIRATION IN 80S MOVIES AND 80S NOSTALGIA ALA STRANGER THINGS, IT FOLLOWS, AND IT. I'VE BEEN WANTING TO PLAY MORE WITH AESTHETICS FROM DIFFERENT DECADES.

Photographer: ATOM





You are without a doubt one of the most awesome people we have met! Have you always thought you wanted to model or did it just happen? Thank you! I did and I didn't. My mom was a model before I was born and put me through different acting and modeling classes as a kid. I was really camera-shy when I was young so I didn't really pursue it. I never considered myself beautiful or sexy so I only put myself out there when SG approached me. Kind of to see if I could and if I'd like it. So I guess you can say I just fell into it by chance and initially wasn't too sure what my feelings would be about it. I don't regret it because I've met amazing people and gained incredible opportunities. I'm very grateful and surprised by how everything came together.

Every time of the year seems exciting for you. You're always up to something. When is your chill time and what do you get up to? Oh, I don't get much! I also work full-time so I'm constantly hustling. My down time is when I turn off my phone and watch a movie with my dog, Ash.

Something you wear with aplomb is your sense of style. We bet you are starting to put quite a collection. What is your favourite piece? I don't think I have a favourite piece. I think I gain confidence in the pieces I wear because a lot isn't sent to me; I save up for them and it makes them more special to me and thus am more self-confident when I wear my favorite sets.

It was clear from your feature you have a great figure! Where does that come from? Do you have to work for it or is it just good jeans/genes? Ahh thank you! It's definitely a little of both. I have a pretty basic metabolism so I have to watch every thing I eat and try to work out as often as I can (not as often as I would like sometimes, but baby steps), but the boobs, waist, and hips came from mom. She gave me a good head start.

Someone once asked me to describe "awesome" in one word and I said Pulp. You're a definite icon of just general amazingness too. Do you see yourself as a bad ass? Haha, I see myself as a smart ass more than a bad ass.

What's next for you? I want to get into Twitch streaming and maybe Youtube.

Are you a homebird or someone that prefers a night on the town? Homebird 110%. I'll go out, but I really want to go home as soon as I leave, hah!

IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE PULP. WHAT ARE YOU UP TO AFTER THIS INTERVIEW IS DONE? THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME! OH MAN, I'M PLAYING SOME ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD FOR SURE. PARTY ON, WAYNE.





HAVE YOU GOT A MESSAGE FOR YOUR MASSES OF FANS AND OUR LOVELY ELITE READERS? STAY RAD, FAM! IT'S BEEN A BLAST AND BE SURE TO CHECK ME OUT ON PATREON AND MY OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA. I LIKE TO THINK I'M FUNNY AND NEED VALIDATION.





FINALLY, WILL YOU BE COMING BACK TO US SHORTLY AS WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF YOU! I DEFINITELY HOPE SO! SOONER RATHER THAN LATER!!





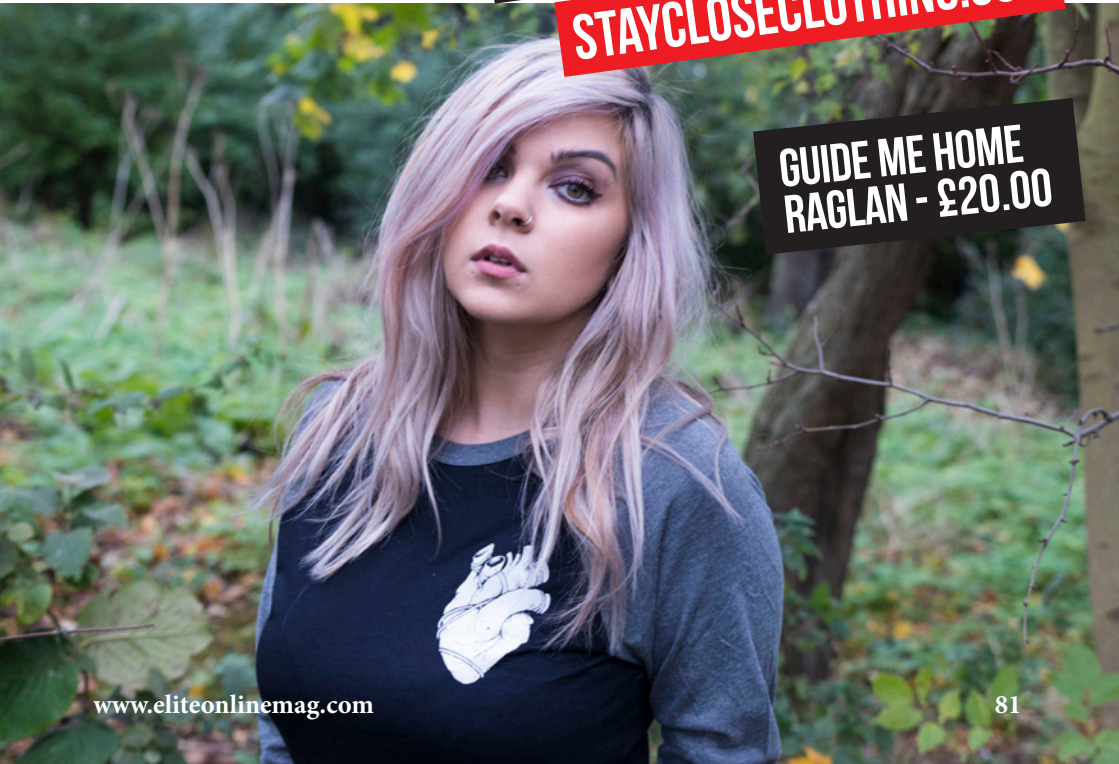


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Photographer: ATOM | Model: Keshia



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Photographer: ATOM

KITTY KING



Hey Kitty! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Well I'm Kitty K, I'm a glamour model who works on phone lines for a TV channel. I ride my black ninja motorbike and also swim around in a mermaid tail for fun haha! I'm just a down to earth, very open minded person living life and trying to experience as much as possible.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Fun, fun, fun! So many giggles and just easy going. Can't wait for next.

What was your favourite part of the shoot? Trying different outfits and looks. I always love a pose ;)

What's your favourite part of your body and why? My eyes and many say the same. Otherwise my waist as it's so curvy.

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? Hard to answer as everyones eyes sees different. As a person I'm pretty awesome so with looks and personality included I'd say strong 7 in the mirror.

2017 HAS BEEN A
PRETTY BIG YEAR FOR
MANY PEOPLE. HOW
HAVE YOU FOUND IT SO
FAR? IT'S MY COCOON
YEAR... 2018 IS MY
BUTTERFLY YEAR SO
WATCH THIS SPACE.





What is your favourite flavour of ice cream?

All. Haha karamel sutra from Ben and Jerry's is up there though.

What's your favourite song currently?

That is too hard for me, I like so so many!

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Anything acoustic. I like live acoustic music.

Describe your perfect photoshoot:

I like them to all be different, I get bored easy haha.

Where has been your favourite place to travel?

Prague or Berlin! I love to see culture.

What do you like most about Elite?

The girls are always amazing! So hot and fun, and real! Can't beat real :)





IF YOU COULD MODEL FOR ANY BRAND, PRODUCT OR COMPANY, WHICH WOULD IT BE AND WHY? I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE ON A HUGE BILLBOARD... SO ANY IF I CAN BE ONE OF THEM GIRLS HAHA.





**WHAT'S A GUARANTEED TURN ON FOR YOU?
A FIRM GRAB OR FOOT TICKLES HAHA.**

**FINALLY, IS THERE
ANYTHING YOU WOULD
LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE
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Laika & Teeniebash





Photographer: Tripodski

What's your best feature? My feet are small and chubby but I kinda like them.

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot? There's a few up-close and personal shots in there with Teeniebash and I always get the giggles when we're trying to be sexy and serious :P

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions? I love to draw and would love to use that to become a tattoo artist.

So how can a guy impress you? Just being straight forward I guess... I can't deal with guys playing games.

Who has been your favourite model of 2017? I can never just pick one! Current favourites are Keshia, Dannika and Rouge.

What is the naughtiest thing you've done? My naughty side comes out when I'm drunk... but my memory is a little fuzzy, sorry!





Photographer: Tripodski

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Hmm... Having my neck kissed or my bumcheeks tickled, haha!

Beards - Yes or No? A wee bit of stubble is attractive I think ;)

What's the worst idea you have ever had? There's a few of my tattoos that I would say were really bad ideas!

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite readers? As always, thanks for having me and I'll hopefully be back soon!





Hi Teeniebash, welcome to Elite! How did you enjoy the shoot? Yeah it was great fun! Would love to work with Elite again in the future.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? I really enjoyed myself. It was nice to meet everyone too, I felt really at ease.





What was it like to work with Laika? We have worked together a few times now and it's always a blast. She's a lovely wee score.

What's Laika's best feature? Her butt! And her cute little face!

What's your best feature? I have no idea! I like the colour of my eyes.

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot? I think the patter in general was a good giggle. I don't take myself too seriously.

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions? I'm basically a work-a-holic. I use to draw lots, but I've not really had time for anything recently. I'm boring. I know.

Who has been your favourite model of 2017? Aww it has to be Raquel Reed! I had the pleasure of performing with her in 2016. She is an utter sweetheart and has been killing it this year!

What is the naughtiest thing you've done? Oh dear. Well naughty to some people is nothing to others, so that's quite hard to answer.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? I need someone who can cook! I say this all the time. I love cooking, but it would be nice to have a partner who could make me a slap up meal.

Beards - Yes or No? Either or! I'm not daft for a beard, but I don't hate them either. If it's well kept and looked after then it's a thumbs up from me. I worked at the Braw Beard and Moustache championships this year and it was amazing! It's crazy some of the facial hair you see at these events.

What's the worst idea you have ever had? Pretty much all of the ideas I've ever had! I'm a bit of a trouble maker. I don't mean it though I just find myself in lots of ridiculous situations.

Photographer: Tripodski

SO HOW CAN A GUY
IMPRESS YOU? PLAY
WITH MY HAIR AND
WATCH MOVIES
WITH ME. BRING
SNACKS TOO. I'M
EASILY IMPRESSED!



FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY
TO THE ELITE READERS? THANK YOU FOR HAVING
ME AGAIN! BEEN A PLEASURE.





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PHOTOGRAPHER: JACK RUSSELL @JACKRUSSELL_PHOTO
MODEL: ROUGE SUICIDE @SHOWMEYOURTITCH



StephanieGo

Photographer: ATOM



Hey! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Well my names Steph, I love dogs, delinquent Harley Quinn, food and sleep <3

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Oh my! Well both Atom Creative and Tripodski were the ultimate lads. it was so much fun! I can't wait to be invited back <3

What was your favourite part of the shoot? Getting to try on all the fabulous brands <3

What's your favourite part of your body and why? My bum. It's so dainty but shapely.

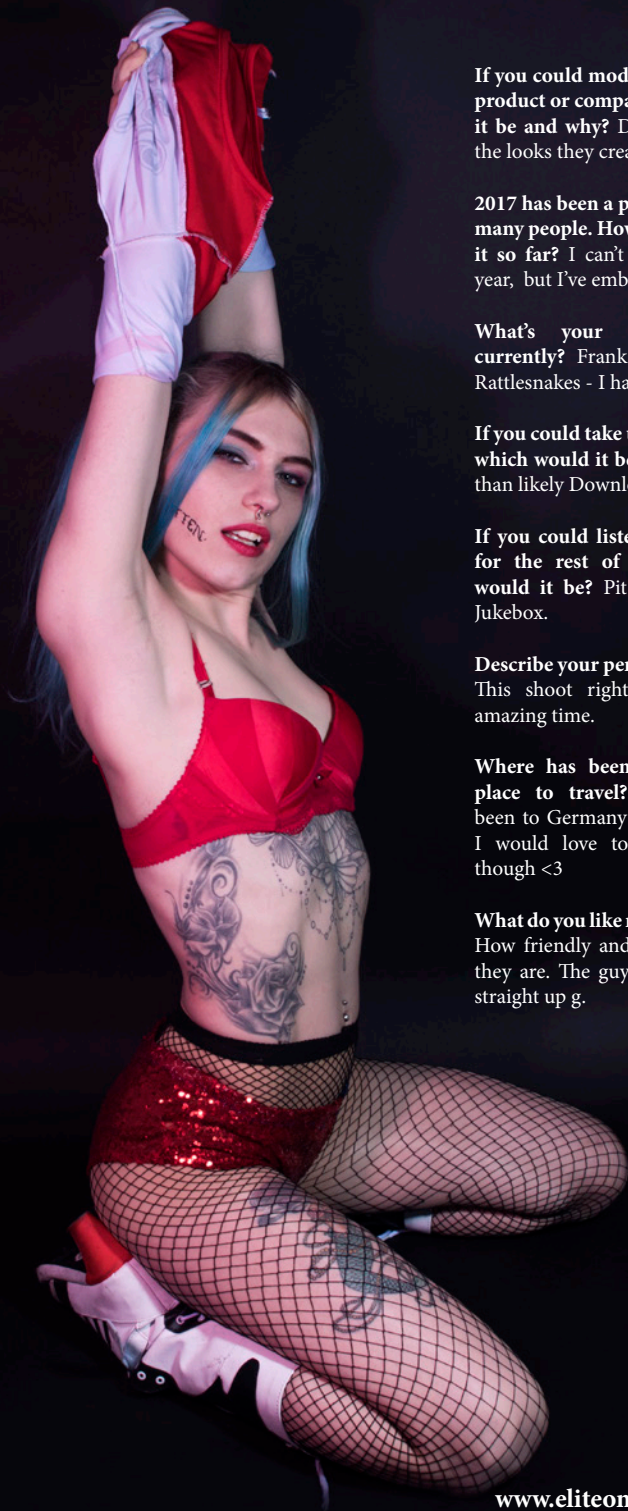
On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? I'll say a 5? I've seen better, but I've seen worse. I'm content.





WHAT IS YOUR
FAVOURITE FLAVOUR
OF ICE CREAM? BEN
AND JERRY'S COOKIE
DOUGH. YUM.





If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Dolls Kill. I adore the looks they create.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? I can't say it's been my year, but I've embraced it.

What's your favourite song currently? Frank Carter and the Rattlesnakes - I hate you.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? More than likely Download.

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Pit and Pendulum's Jukebox.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: This shoot right here. I had a amazing time.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? I've only ever been to Germany on a school trip. I would love to go Amsterdam though <3

What do you like most about Elite? How friendly and accommodating they are. The guy that runs it is a straight up g.



**WHAT'S A
GUARANTEED
TURN ON FOR YOU?
SOMEONE WHO ISN'T
AFRAID TO SHOW
AFFECTION. <3**





**FINALLY, IS
THERE ANYTHING
YOU WOULD LIKE
TO SAY TO THE
ELITE READERS?
I LOVE YOU.**

Photographer: ATOM



ALT CLUB NIGHT

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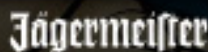


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Photographer: Gemma Edwards

IZABELLA RAE JAXX

Hey Izabella! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: For those that don't know me, I'm a pixie alien here to rock your world! I've been modelling for around 4 years now, I like to get creative and express myself through my work. Also I'm a coffee addict and I'm obsessed with glitter.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? To get a chance to work with the stunning Gemma Edwards was amazing, I was so nervous on my way to meet her because it's GEMMA EDWARDS and she's such a babe! But as soon as I met her she made me feel at ease and we breezed through the shoot. I was so excited looking through the photos immediately after we'd finished!





What was your favourite part of the shoot? My favourite part of the shoot was all of it from the quirky apartment we used to the setting we chose to shoot this set and I love the record player, as I love music anyway. I liked that we could bring that element into the set itself.

What's your favourite part of your body and why? I'd probably have to say my eyes, it fascinates me they change colour daily from steely grey to bright blue and every shade between!



Photographer: Gemma Edwards



**WHAT IS YOUR
FAVOURITE
FLAVOUR OF ICE
CREAM? MINT
CHOC CHIP IS
THE ICE CREAM
DREAMS ARE
MADE OF.**





Photographer: Gemma Edwards

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? I'd say I'm probably a 6, maybe a 7 at a push!

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? I would love to model for Dolls Kill or Collectif Vintage Clothing! I adore both brands.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? 2017 has actually been quite a good year for myself, I've moved cities and had some amazing shoots and I got the amazing opportunity to be on the catwalk at The Great British Tattoo Show in May and it was an amazing weekend I met so many beautiful people.



What's your favourite song currently? At the minute I'm loving Tash Sultana, her voice is another level and chills me out when I get time to relax.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? I've always wanted to go to a festival, but I've actually never been to one! So I guess if I was going to have you as my guest of homie I'd have to say Bloodstock or Download.

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Die Antwoord! I love them, I could listen to any or all of these songs forever and not get bored! Plus Yolandi Visser is a Queen!



What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Hmm guaranteed turn on for me is definitely someone who takes control or even just wearing amazing sets of underwear I feel like a goddess.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: I've always wanted to do a photo shoot in a thunderstorm wearing a killer outfit of latex and just be drenched throwing some poses with lighting in the background!

Where has been your favourite place to travel? So far my favourite place to travel has been Italy. I went skiing and it was amazing definitely something I'd like to do again!

What do you like most about Elite? I love Elite because they show the hottest babes around and it's always an interesting read finding out about anyone featured!





FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? JUST ALWAYS BE YOURSELF, PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS BE JEALOUS OR TRY AND KNOCK YOU DOWN, BUT THE ONLY WAY THEY CAN EFFECT YOU IS WHEN YOU LET THEM! STAY TRUE TO YOU AND FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT AND FOCUS YOU CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING.





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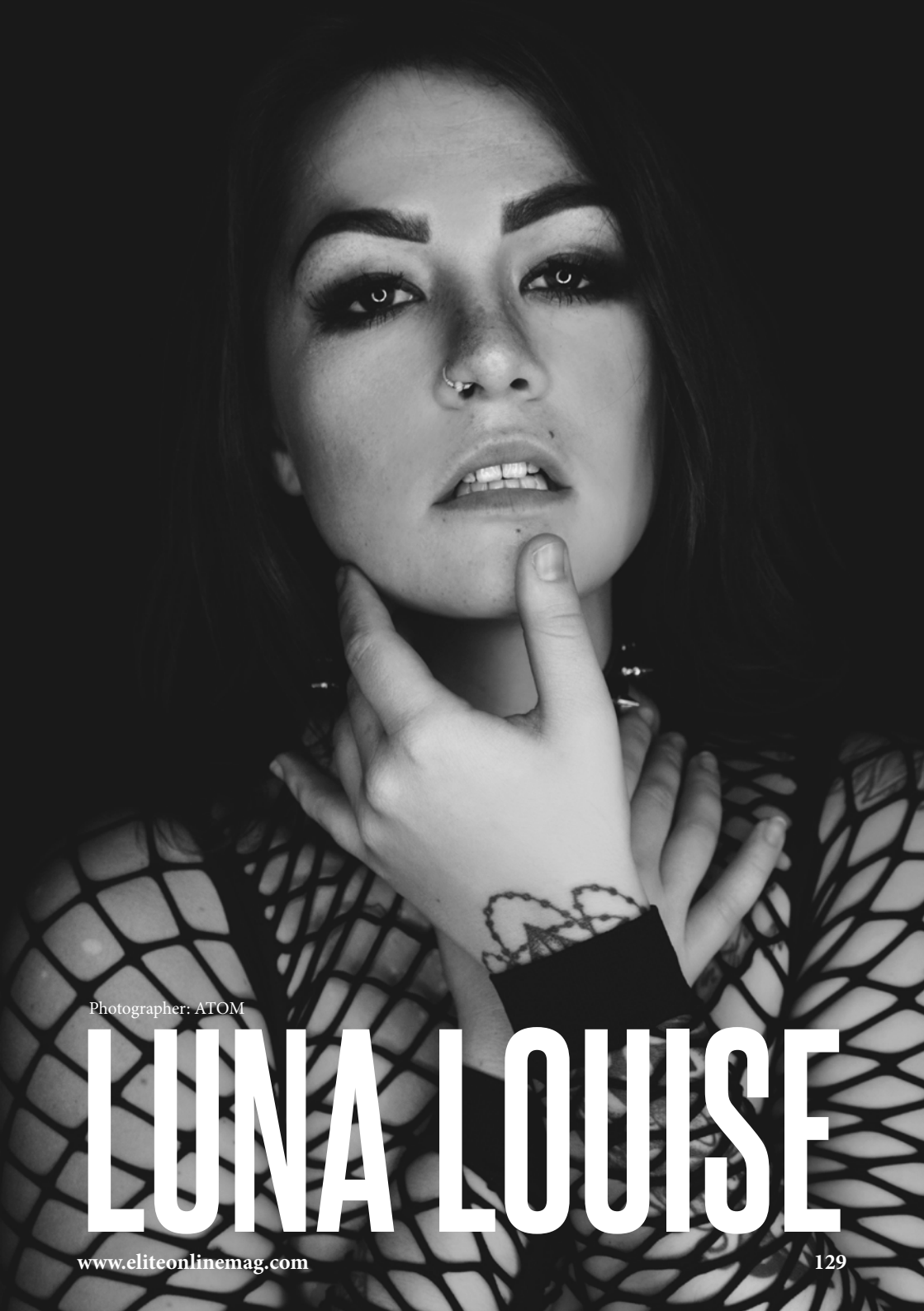
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STREET®**

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Photographer: ATOM

LUNA LOUISE



Hey Luna Louise! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself:

Hey guys! I'm Luna. I can hip hop, be-bop, dance till ya drop. And I can yo yo yo make a wicked cup of co co.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot?

ATOM is awesome to work with! His shoots include cheesy teenage girl pop music, jokes so bad they're good, and Greggs. Whats not to like?

What was your favourite part of the shoot?

ATOM has a smooth soulful gospel like singing voice. His high notes we're definitely a highlight.



2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? This year has been the best of my life! I followed my dream to travel more and managed to visit over 15 countries this year a long with being given some incredible opportunities! Gonna be a hard one to top.



**ON A SCALE OF ONE TO
TEN, HOW GOOD LOOKING
ARE YOU? IF WE'RE
TALKING ABOUT WHEN
I ACCIDENTALLY OPEN
MY FRONT CAMERA AND
LOOK LIKE THE HULK.
DEFINITELY 10/10.**





**WHAT'S YOUR
FAVOURITE PART
OF YOUR BODY AND
WHY? RECENTLY I'VE
STARTED ENJOYING
MY EYES A LITTLE
MORE. I USED TO
HATE THEM!**



DESCRIBE YOUR PERFECT PHOTOSHOOT: SOMEWHERE OVERSEAS IN A BEAUTIFUL HOT LOCATION WITH GORGEOUS LINGERIE/BIKINIS.



If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why?

Well last time I said Lovechild Boudoir, but I was lucky enough to model in that for this shoot which was amazing! So now I would have to say Elissa Poppy. Her stuff is gorgeous.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Chocolate orange om nom nom. Or cream tea, or raspberry and dark chocolate? Ughh do I have to pick just one?

What's your favourite song currently? Anything sung by Julia Michaels I'm all over. Shes so under rated!

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Hmm, got be Glastonbury. I've heard it's pretty amazing. I always said I'd never want to go because it's too big but the idea has become more appealing recently.

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? It would have to be something easy on the ear! Maybe like a Bob Marley's Greatest Hits album!

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? A man whos not ashamed to show his woman off! And obviously a sense of humour. Laughter makes me dribble.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Ah that's a hard one! I would have to say Thailand. Although, Switzerland is definitely close second!

What do you like most about Elite? Definitely the family like vibe it has about it! Everyone's so different and we're all accepted and celebrated for that!



Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite Readers? Thanks a bunch for taking the time to read my babble! However on the slight chance you have liked what you've read and seen, hit me up on Instagram to see more! Thanks for stopping by!





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PHOTOGRAPHER: JACK RUSSELL @JACKRUSSELL_PHOTO
MODEL: ROUGE SUICIDE @SHOWMEYOURTITCH



Siam

Photographer: ATOM

Hey Sian! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hey! I'm a normal girl and I work full time. I'm a single mum with the best group of friends in the world and an amazing family. I've moved around a bit and seen a lot and I love to party so I definitely have best of both worlds. I also think I'm hilarious!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Well they say time flies when your having fun and this was over in a flash. I was made to feel so comfortable and had such a lovely time.

What's your favourite part of your body and why? I don't have a favourite, but I usually get comments on my beauty spot and teeth so does that class as a body part? I like my lips too.

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? Obviously 10 bitch haha! No probably a 7, then a strong 8 when I'm out and all done up haha.

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Victoria's Secret they're all amazing! And for the discount...Duh.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? Shit.. but it's getting better.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Ben & Jerrys phisj food or a 99 with bits, juice and a flake. You cannot beat a Mr. Whippy.

What's your favourite song currently? Cardy B - Bodak Yellow and JRiley - Oh No.







**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE SHOOT?
THE LAST OUTFIT I WAS IN MY ELEMENT HAHA.**

**IF YOU COULD TAKE US
TO ANY FESTIVAL, WHICH
WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

**I'VE ONLY EVER BEEN
TO LEEDS FEST TO SEE
EMINEM AND IT WAS
AMAZING. SO I WOULD
TAKE YOU THERE AND
RELIVE THAT A MILLION
TIMES IF I COULD.**





If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Dr. Dre - 2001/

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Nice teeth, neck and tattoos (or a big tasty with bacon extra cheese and extra bacon) food will always do it for me haha.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: Somewhere really cool like a waterfall.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? I have a new found love for Ibiza.





WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT ELITE? THE DIVERSITY OF THE MODEL.
EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT AND I LOVE THAT GIRL POWER!

**FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING
YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO
THE ELITE READERS?** LOVE
YOU ALL GIVE ME A FOLLOW
AND LET ME KNOW WHAT
YOU THINK. IF YOU LIKE ME,
I'LL COME BACK <3



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COUNTERPARTS

@ CLWB IFOR BACH, CARDIFF
SUPPORT: NAPOLEON, POLAR
12TH NOVEMBER 2017





Counterparts have been coming back to the UK repeatedly over the past few years and their popularity seems to be ever growing, that's especially apparent when you look at the stellar support they have on this run.

Melodic tech metallers Napoleon open and sound better than ever tonight. They appear to have more energy and urgency in their approach and attack their set with a point to prove and a point they well and truly smash out the park. The nuances in Sam Osborn's razor sharp riffs shine through whilst the rhythm section sound thick and tight. Wes Thompson on vocals looks more comfortable now than on previous shows and his voice soars here in Cardiff.

Now comes the consistently brilliant Polar, a band who always deliver ferocious performances and look likely to show up whoever they share a stage with. Opening one-two of 'Blood For Blood' and 'Downfall' definitely sees the previously muted crowd spring into life and get forward to grab the mic from focused and engaged frontman Adam 'Woody' Woodford. Brand new single 'Breathe' sounds heavier and huge in the live environment as the band play with a fire in their bellies. It still baffles this reviewer that this band aren't bigger than they are, here's to hoping the next record sees them get the credit they deserve.



COUNTERPARTS

@ CLWB IFOR BACH, CARDIFF
SUPPORT: NAPOLEON, POLAR
12TH NOVEMBER 2017





Armed with new record 'You're Not You Anymore' and a handful of new members, Counterparts take to the stage and do what the band has always done, play from the heart and connect with their fans. As soon as 'Bouquet' starts people are clambering over and on top one another to scream and shout back Brendan Murphy's lyrics. The songs from YNYA slide into the set effortlessly and get greeted like old favourites. Brendan's still got his dry wit and humour that settles the audience in between songs as the band dole out slabs of intense riffin' and singable moments. 'The Disconnect' sees the band stop during key lyric "I fucking hate the world, I fucking hate myself" which proves to be as intense and emotional than ever. 'Compass' closes tonight and sees a mini stage invasion complete with vocal takeover by two fans. Counterparts are a band that connect with their fans and do their best to get up close and personal with them for 45 minutes to an hour a night.

Words and photos by Joshua Clarke





Oxford is miserable, it's wet, it's cold, it's grey...however the O2 Academy has two shows on tonight. Even amidst the horrible weather, generations of metal fans line opposite sides of the venue for Bury Tomorrow in the upstairs room, whilst we will be heading into the main room for Cradle of Filth.

Tour support Savage Messiah open tonight to a slowly filling room but dish out their modern take on NWOBHM with added twists and flair. The majority of the room look on and applause politely whilst a throng at the front get into it and the London based band appear to have gained a few more fans. They tackle their live show like they're headlining Wembley and it appears they know what their good at at this moment in time. 'Eat Your Heart Out' stands out head and shoulders above the rest of the set as its filled with hooks and a real ear worm. Overall Savage Messiah go down well and set up the night in tremendous fashion, one to keep an eye on in this scene.



CRADLE OF FILTH

@ O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
7TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUPPORT: SAVAGE MESSIAH



Coming out to excited screams and a 75% full room at this point are goth metal legends Cradle of Filth. A band with a flair for the dramatic but a very minimal set up although the aesthetic is still there. The drum set is protected by a plastic shield but nothing protects the members out in front when the CO2 cannons fire off throughout the set. Something we didn't expect in a room this size. The audience is made up mainly of die hards and fans who have invested time in CoF, there doesn't appear to be many casuals in tonight and it shows as whatever the band lay down, old, new, rare, gets lapped up and treated like an all time favourite. Frontman and icon Dani Filth pierces through the technical and atmospheric attacks with his trademark scream, that over time becomes tedious and quite frankly grating. 'Bathory Aria' is a bit more of a sombre and slower effort, an 11 minute epic that sails over frosty seas. There's very little in the way of between song banter, apart from when Dani said that Oxford has a shit football team, which led to a few boo's. However it's business as usual and Cradle of Filth show they still have life left in them, just about.

Words and photos by Joshua Clarke



CRADLE OF FILTH

@ O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
7TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUPPORT: SAVAGE MESSIAH









ENTER SHIKARI

@ MOTORPOINT ARENA, CARDIFF

17TH NOVEMBER 2017

**SUPPORT: ASTROID BOYS,
LOWER THAN ATLANTIS**

It's been a while since Enter Shikari set foot in Wales but tonight they are back to grace the stage of the Motorpoint Arena, a place which has hosted some of the biggest bands our country has produced. No pressure then boys!

Tonight, rowdy homeboys Astroid Boys open the bill to an already fairly full arena. It's unsurprising that they get a great reception seeing as they're playing on home turf, and to give them credit they are full of an energy that they manage to spread to the crowd. Following them are the somewhat lack-lustre Lower Than Atlantis. For a band well past their infancy, they get a reception of a band less known. They try to crack a few jokes but it's just not enough to save their set of saturated pop-rock grooves. Sorry boys, let's put Beech Like A Tree back in the setlist, then we can talk...

Before long it's time for the famous Shikari 10 minute countdown. In the past it has been filled of cheesy pop classics and movie-man voiceovers but this tour, Mr Magpie and his fellow animal friends bring us a far more sophisticated countdown. The whole idea of The Spark being an operation based on global, political and personal endeavours is weaved not only through this countdown and the set, but also across the bands promotion online. It's incredibly well thought out and the success of such effort is credit to Enter Shikari as more than musicians, but as artists instead.

The setlist is to die for. Opening with The Sights, vocalist Rou Reynolds, messes up his first verse, but all is forgiven because after that each and every song is absolutely flawless. The crowd are a sea of putty in the hands of these four boys as there is not a person in this room that is not having the time of their lives. The quadrophonic sound is stunning, it makes you fully emerged in every song; the aggression of Arguing With Thermometers hits you ten times harder than normal and the acoustics of Airfield wrap around you in a mist that leaves you quite tearful. It's massively impressive how a band can take you through a journey that encompasses the tenderness of Adieu, the celebration of Live Outside, the growls of Anaesthetist and the party of Antwerpen. Not only does it sound phenomenal, but it also looks pretty amazing too. The visual production has been scaled back since the last tour but it is no-less awesome: a microscopic lense showcases various images throughout the night as it hovers over the band below who are all showing off moves of their own, yeah we see you there with those crazy moves Rou!

In all honesty, this night is one that could be spoken about in great depths, but for the purpose of your sanity, it can be left at this... Enter Shikari remain as one of the best live bands around and with The Spark in their arsenal they are truly unstoppable.

Words by Alice Hoddinott
Photos by Joshua Clarke

ENTER SHIKARI
@ MOTORPOINT ARENA, CARDIFF
17TH NOVEMBER 2017
SUPPORT: ASTROID BOYS,
LOWER THAN ATLANTIS





The most consistent band live and on record stroll into Bristol on the back of sell out shows across our land armed with some of the fiercest and impressive supports we've ever seen. Will there be any upsets? Will one of the new boys lay down the gauntlet for veterans Comeback Kid and Every Time I Die to follow?

Hailing from Leeds Higher Power are on first and come prepared with their brand of 90s influenced hardcore that relies more on grooves and vibe than sheer brutality. There's enough going on in their songs to sink your teeth into and the frenetic yet dark light show accompanies their sound well. While still filling up as they play the crowd get more and more into it and open up a couple of pits early on. A solid opening to what is expected to be a memorable night.

The hottest band in hardcore are up next and Knocked Loose spent no time messing about as they rip into "Oblivions Peak". The ferociousness at which they play is frightening and it's a feeling emulated in the audience as bodies and limbs fly about everywhere. Judging by the looks on the faces of security they've never seen anything like it, "what are they doing?" remarks one of them witnessing spin kicks and windmills. The band sound absolutely fucking brilliant and deliver not one of the best support sets of the year, but one of the stand out sets of 2017, helped in the way that frontman Bryan Garris is a superstar in the making with his disgustingly delicious delivery that could cut glass.

Comeback Kid come on and do what Comeback Kid do best, lay to waste live. The bands first visit to our shores since the release of new album Outsider and the tracks aired tonight sound even bigger live than on record. They also delve into their back catalogue by opening with 'False Idols Fall' from the highly celebrated Wake The Dead and also 'All In A Year' from the bands debut Turn It Around, which pleases many of the older fans who have been with the band from the beginning. The injuries in the pit are becoming more consistent as kids get carried out with bloodied noses and mouths which adds to the atmosphere in here. As usual 'Wake The Dead' takes us home with a deafening singalong.





EVERY TIME I DIE

@SWX, BRISTOL

26TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUPPORT: HIGHER POWER,
KNOCKED LOOSE, COMEBACK KID



It must be fun being in Every Time I Die, knowing that whatever you play will set everyone in the room off. Tonight is another tour in support of the bands latest record *Low Teens* but it's the choice of rare cuts that spark the most excitement in the form of 'Romeo A Go-Go', 'Imitation Is The Sincerest Form Of Battery' and 'Apocalypse Now and Then'. However the likes of 'Petal' and 'Glitches' from *Low Teens* demolish Bristol tonight and see's smiles all round from the first note to the last. Guitarist Jordan Buckley is sporting a rather fetching boot as he broke his foot a few shows ago but does that stop him from being as unhinged as ever in his performance? Does it fuck, the mans a machine and gives us his best moves from over the years and head bangs like it's going out of style. Andy Williams hulks over the audience and delivers his thick textured and spastic riffs for fun, the driving force in the band. Iconic frontman Keith Buckley is still as enigmatic, charismatic and infectious as ever but over the past few tours we've noticed his voice has taken a bit of a battering. He doesn't sound terrible by any means but it's becoming more apparent that time has caught up with him and when you tour as much as Every Time I Die do its gunna affect your performance. Once again though he still shows us all how its done. A phenomenal evening with *Knocked Loose* living up to the hype and then some giving the older boys a run for their money, but undisputedly Every Time I Die still reign as kings of our world.

Words & photos by Joshua Clarke



EVERY TIME I DIE

@ SWX, BRISTOL

26TH NOVEMBER 2017

**SUPPORT: HIGHER POWER,
KNOCKED LOOSE, COMEBACK KID**



NORTHLANE

@ KEY CLUB, LEEDS

29TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUPPORT: OCEAN GROVE,
INVENT ANIMATE, ERRA

There is a palpable sense of anticipation in Leeds' Key Club this evening, with a crowd already beginning to swell even before openers Ocean Grove take to the stage.

With a bassist sporting a bold look and a quip about Leeds United legend Harry Kewell (that sadly missed the mark with a lot of younger members of the audience in attendance), the Australian Nu-Metal revivalists show some moments of real quality, however their attempts at lofty choruses are hamstrung by the poor sound offered by the surroundings. Fortunately the five piece don't let the drab surroundings of the cold evening dampen their spirits. They get some of the faithful jostling down the front and their closing song contains a truly mammoth sounding riff that inspires enough curiosity to visit their studio outputs. Although the stop start nature and general weirdness that they exhibit doubtless left some of the more po-faced members of the audience cold.



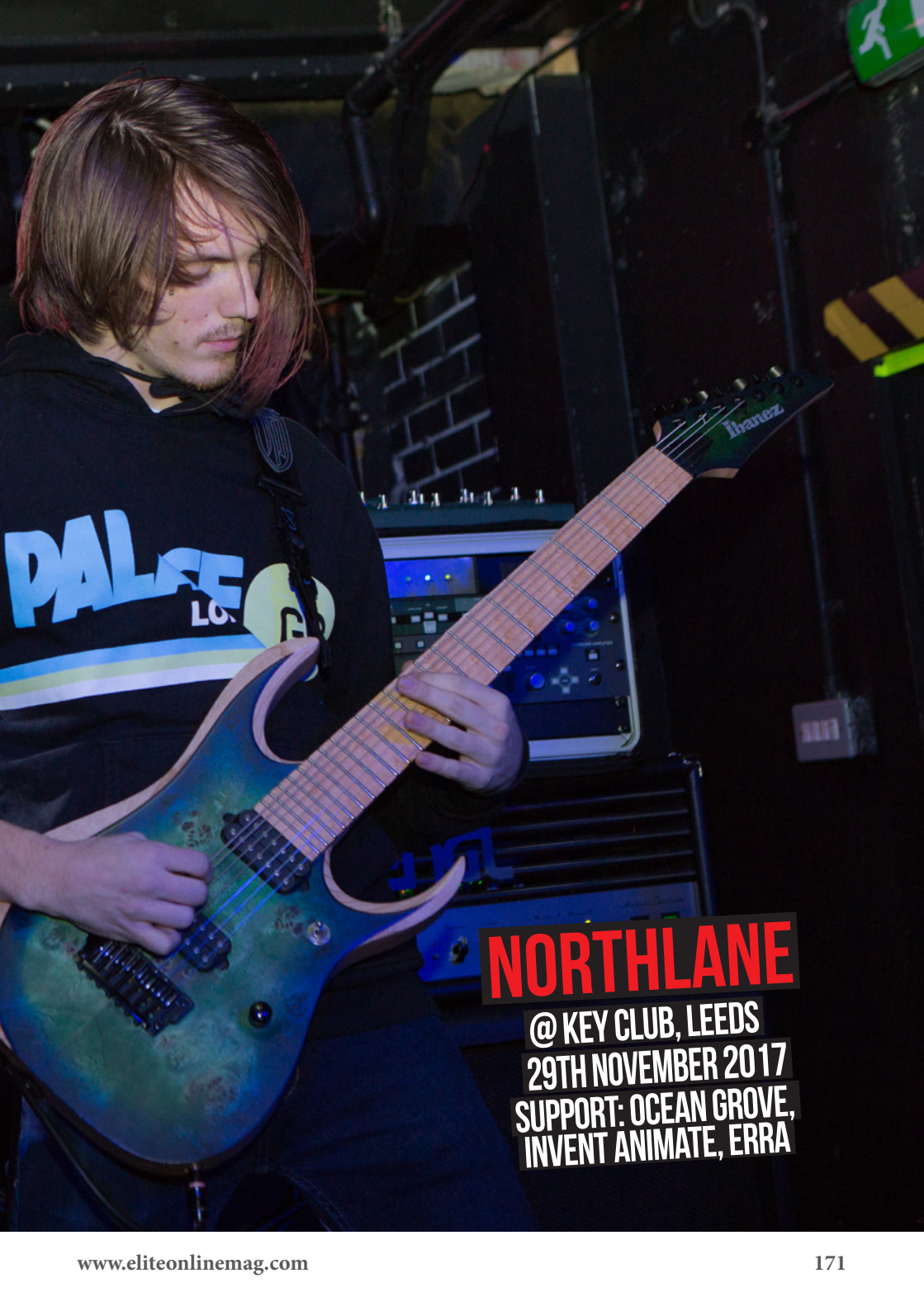
Invent Animate are by contrast a much more straightforward prospect, offering a warped tour metalcore by numbers sound that has been done to death by a million better bands by this point in time, the Texans amiably pump out breakdown after breakdown. There are some tasty grooves in the latter half of their set, but this is the equivalent of musical junk food; no sooner has the last note ceased ringing out have you already forgotten it.

Erra again offer something different for the attendees, pumping out much more technically realised songs that are just the right side of danceable; encourage the crowd out of its lethargy as the jostling begins. Some of the more egregious sound issues that plagued the previous two bands have been resolved as well resulting in a much clearer mix, as clean vocals and involved melodic guitar lines cut through to the back of the room. By the end of their too short set Erra have convinced an arms in the air singalong from the audience, allowing them to leave the stage feeling triumphant.

Whilst not as musically engaging as Erra were Northlane make up for this with sheer mastery of their craft, controlling the crowd singer Marcus Bridge coerces sing-a-longs, mosh pits, and crowd surfers pretty much from the first note to the last. Sound issues have disappeared by this point resulting in the walls echoing with full thick slabs of metallic noise. There are some slight surprises in the performance as well, as the set progresses synth segues into the mix providing some nice divergence from generic riffing and breakdowns that underpin so much of the genre, and the clean vocals at one point have a touch of Tool's Maynard James Keenan about them, which is always welcome. By the end of their set Northlane leave no one in doubt that next time they're back it won't be in such an intimate setting.

Words by Robert Burns
Photos by Emma Stone





NORTHLANE

**@ KEY CLUB, LEEDS
29TH NOVEMBER 2017
SUPPORT: OCEAN GROVE,
INVENT ANIMATE, ERRA**

PRESS TO MECO

HERE'S TO THE FATIGUE

UK TOUR PTM 2017

NOV

BRIGHTON 21 THE HOPE

OXFORD 23 ACADEMY 3

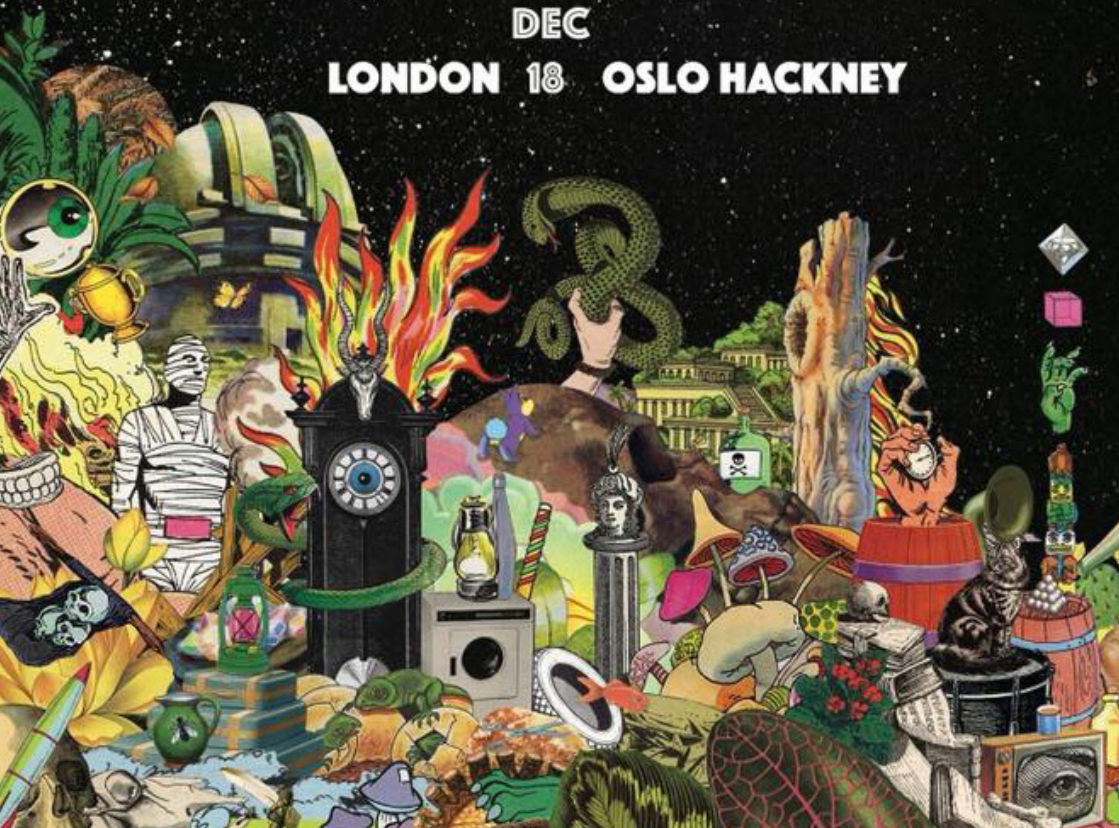
LEEDS 25 KEY CLUB

NEWCASTLE 27 JUMPING JACKS

GLASGOW 28 SLEAZIES

DEC

LONDON 18 OSLO HACKNEY



PRESS TO MECO

@ KEY CLUB, LEEDS

25TH NOVEMBER 2017

**SUPPORT: VEXXES, DEADSET
DREAM, LOST GROUND**

The intimate surroundings of Leeds' Key Club can be both a blessing and a curse for technically minded bands. The potential to connect with the audience in such a close environment is unparalleled, however the acoustics of the venue can be truly abysmal at times, and has seen some of the more intricate aspects of a bands sounds get lost to the ether.

It was with this in mind that there is a sense of trepidation ahead of tonight's line up; as each band embodies progressive and technical elements in different ways.

Deadset Dream blend synths with big choruses to create a poppy post-hardcore hybrid. Bouncing through a breathless set including most recent release I Fancy Your Chances Kid they are definitely ones to watch closely.

Lost Ground in contrast are a much more measured affair. Warm and personable on stage and showcasing some excellent songs. Toeing more of a math rock line, clean intricate guitar lines and off kilter timings and rhythms are the order of the day. Leaning heavily into this year's Absent EP the set is much less vocally aggressive than their older material. This is undermined slightly by the environments which is a crying shame but these boys are a shining beacon in the local scene.

Press to Meco power through sound issues to deliver a commanding performance. Warm and personable, engaging with the crowd they display a confidence beyond their years. Hooks abound as tracks bob and weave in and out and the three piece play off of each other with individual vocal performances on the verses that build to huge harmonised choruses that are lapped up by the sweaty faithful down the front.

Words by Robert Burns



LOUD NOISE

SATURDAY
NOV 4TH 2017
TICKETS PRESALE € 25

THE SOUND
REVOLUTION

Sick of it all

Cro-Mag

A COLD
WORLD

EXCL. EUROPEAN 2017 SHOW

NO WARNING

EXCL. EUROPEAN 2017 SHOW



DOG EAT DOG

EXCL. 'ALL BORO KINGS' SET

100 DEMONS

EXCL. EUROPEAN 2017 SHOW

WISDOM
IN CHAINS



Iron's Law

BISHOP
GREEN

WWW.THESOUND...

After its impressive debut last year, The Sound Of Revolution Festival in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, continues with another 12 hours of back to back hardcore and punk. The huge Klokgebouw venue's layout takes a bit of getting used to, especially now they've added a third stage - Warzone Stage. The two main stages run consecutively which was helpful last year for not missing any bands. However, the festival goes this year are faced with the all-too-familiar festival dilemma of "Who do I want to see more?"

REVOLUTION STAGE

This Means War from The Lowlands (Netherlands/Belgium) set the mood for their set (and the evening overall) with a sound clip of the "skinhead choir" version of Savage Garden's Truly Madly Deeply before kicking into their melodic hardcore-meets-Oi! style punk. With some parts reminiscent of one of last year's headliners, Ignite, and some parts more along the lines of The Bouncing Souls, This Means War are not as aggressive as their name suggests...or how they look. Songs like Sailing Anarchy and Keep

The Home Fires Burning are pure pub sing-alongs that get some toes tapping.

As weird as it must be for them and for the fans being on such a high stage with a barrier, London hardcore heavyweights Knuckledust deliver their heavy, raucous, beatdown-infused hardcore with the same style and energy as ever before. Their more iconic classics like Times Up, Trust No One and 25 Years Dead see the crowd break out into some spin-kicks and windmills. Set closer Bluffs, Lies & Alibis, which sees front man Pierre come down among the crowd, causes people to pile on top of each other for the "We've all had enough..." chorus.

The fact that Wisdom In Chains manage to get a crowd consisting of mostly Europeans, some of whom may have never been Stateside, to sing "Pennsylvania.. I fucking love you!" at the top of their lungs is proof that these guys write some of the most anthemic and infectious hardcore songs ever. WIC, who remind people that this is the first date of their joint tour with Knuckledust, No Turning Back

SOUND OF REVOLUTION

KLOKGEBOUW,
EINDHOVEN
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IS STARS AND STRIPES
EXCL. BENELUX 2017 SHOW

BATTERY

TURNING
BACK
20TH ANNIVERSARY

SLAPSHOT

BACK IN BLACK
EXCL. EUROPEAN
2017 SHOW

RIGHT
DIRECTION

Knuckle
Dust

Strength For A Reason
20TH ANNIVERSARY

HAWSER BRICK BY BRICK
SLANDER THIS MEANS WAR!

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and Strength For A Reason, put on an invigorating set. As great as their songs are on record, WIC are a band that need to be seen, as their energy and overall presence makes all the difference.

There's a lot of big names in hardcore playing on the bill today but its frontman Jack "Choke" Kelly of one of Boston's finest hardcore bands, Slapshot, who almost single-handedly defines hardcore. Within seconds of opener Watch Me Bleed, blood starts running down his face. As well as song after song of fast paced, angst-ridden hardcore punk like the anthemic Old Tyme Hardcore, the catchy Hang Up Your Boots and the aggressive No Friend Of Mine., they manage to slip in a medley of classic rock and metal riffs (Ain't Talkin' Bout Love/Cat Scratch Fever/Run To The Hills..etc..) to show that they're true musicians and music lovers.

No Turning Back are always going to get a big crowd at Sound Of Revolution. Not only are they local heroes but front man Martijn (van den Huevel) is one of the main brains behind the entire affair.

Unlike some of the other long lasting bands tonight, NTB don't really touch upon earlier work but instead focus on the material that they garnered the most success from...which is totally logically. However, this can leave the more old school fans begging for certain songs. No doubt about it, though, NTB still do hardcore right and the crowd goes nuts.

As singer John (Connor) says, they might not be the heaviest band on the bill but Dog Eat Dog certainly know how to bring the party! Despite their past commercial success and change of styles over the years, the band delivers a show dedicated to their most iconic and influential album, All Boro Kings. These Are Good Times, Who's The King? and the legendary No Fronts all have the crowd bouncing like kids at a trampoline park from the moment the saxophone (yes, saxophone) hits, while Pull My Finger and Rocky (the only song in the set not from that album) see some circle pit action. As well as a serious moment paying tribute to a close friend who passed away, Dog Eat Dog entertain with costumes, a "literal" crowd surf on a guitar case and guest

appearances. After all these years, they can still put on a show with their hip hop-meets-hardcore punk anthems!

With “Choke” back at the helm again and even including former Slapshot members, Stars and Stripes both sound and present themselves as Slapshot’s more Oi! counterpart. There’s still those infectious sing-alongs and harsh vocals but at a slower tempo with some rock’n’roll style riffs and solos. There’s also more positivity within the lyrics, with uplifting songs like Hang On (To Your Dreams) and Proud, Strong and Free getting people smiling and dancing along. Stars and Stripes are proof that you don’t need to be British or in your 60s to make great Oi!

Always a welcome addition to every festival lineup, New York hardcore legends Sick Of It All round things off on the Revolution stage with the hall absolutely packed. As always, the band manages to satisfy both older and newer fans as they play as much of their 30+ year old discography as possible (which is easier when some songs are around a minute long). Real oldies like Injustice System, Ratpack and My Life get the circle pits going, whereas the likes of DNC, Us vs Them and fan favourite Step Down invoke crowd participation on the exhilarating choruses. No Cure, the first track of the classic Scratch The Surface album, is a pleasant inclusion as they barely ever play it. With singer Lou Koller’s razor-blade vocals and Pete (Koller - guitar) and Craig (Setari - bass) running around on stage, SOIA’s set is non-stop energy and proves their status as a staple of New York hardcore.

TRUE SPIRIT STAGE

Opening up on the True Spirit Stage is Slander from Venice, Italy, with their fun crossover hardcore. With thrashy riffs and Turnstile-like grooves, there’s a bit of dancing in the crowd although it is still pretty early in the day. Looking a bit like Gary Stringer from Reef in his hay-day, front man Sam jumps around the stage sporting an old school Beastie Boys Aglio e Olio T-shirt as the rest of the band blast through their set with gusto.

Joining fellow Pennsylvanians Wisdom In Chains for the start of the joint tour, Strength For A Reason bring that more Madball-style hardcore to the stage. From the very start of the set with Looking Back to closer Brotherhood, SFAR are very much the “tough guys singing about unity” kind of band.

They definitely give a great performance, as the powerhouse frontman Karl gets everyone fired up to 2-step and sing along, but musically and lyrically it all feels a bit too familiar.

Hailing from Vancouver, Bishops Green introduce some Oi! and street punk to the True Spirit stage. Frontman Greg controls the stage with ease, as his sharp yet melodic (and almost British sounding) vocals sound out above the band’s stomping punk rock. The catchy choruses of songs like Stay Away, The Crow and the glorious Tumbling Down have some people dancing and singing along while many others are simply mesmerised by Greg alone. Bishops Green do British punk just as well as most British bands however it could do with a little bit more originality.

Bridge Nine heavyweights, Backtrack, are on next, with people already opening the pit from the start of Erase The Rat. As the band play their Down To Nothing/Trapped Under Ice influenced hardcore, its absolute stage diving and 2-stepping galore, as well as a sea of arms accentuating the gang vocals. Although very similar to the aforementioned bands, there’s no denying that they do what they do well and are electric on stage.

Like Dog Eat Dog, Toronto’s No Warning may have lost their way in the mid 2000s in the eyes of some fans. However, today they are presented with a good turn out as their later releases have brought fans back around. Like with Backtrack, No Warning’s crossover hardcore and their vibrant showmanship invoke mass stage diving throughout the set.

H2O’s replacement for the festival, DC’s Battery, are here to satisfy the straight edge kids (although not exclusively) with their straight up 80s/90s style hardcore punk. It’s hard to believe they’re a band from the early 90s as they perform with the spirit of a much younger band. Front man Brian (McTernan) walks back and forth along the front of the stage locking eyes with people to enforce his songs’ messages. Besides original songs like Do You Believe and Only The Die Hard Remain, it’s their cover of the 7 Seconds classic Young “Til I Die that really gets people excited.

As if Sick Of It All, Slapshot and Battery were not enough, the festival comes to a close with one of the biggest names in hardcore history; Cro-Mags. Whether done especially for the festival or a regular occurrence nowadays, their set mostly consists of

songs from their debut, *The Age of Quarrel*, which of course couldn't please tonight's crowd any more. For most of the set, singer John (Joseph) sounds just like any person doing punk rock karaoke, which is a tad disappointing. However, his powerful and more melodic thrash vocals appear from time to time and make you glad to have been present. Somehow, the crowd still has enough strength to physically show Cro-Mags just how much they love them (at around midnight).

Due to the scheduling and having to have a break from standing for hours on end, most of the acts on the Warzone stage were harder to see in full. In brief, Dutch band Hawser and Connecticut's 100 Demons are the most impressive; the former give an energetic performance of their bouncy US-style hardcore while the latter bring some a little bit of metal flavour to the proceedings.

For anyone interested in ever attending Sound Of Revolution, you need to make sure you come with enough money for food, drink and merchandise. The nearest cashpoint is almost 10 minutes away and doesn't seem to work for certain cards. Food and drink is paid for in tokens that you can buy on card and some merch stalls might also take card...but we all know how expensive using your card abroad can be. Next year already boasts an interesting line-up of classic Oi! from The Templars and Perkele as well as classic street punk from GBH.

Words by Jonathan Miller

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THE SOUND OF REVOLUTION

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Sick of it all Cro-Mags

STARS AND STRIPES BATTERY A COLD WORLD
EXCL. BENELUX 2017 SHOW EXCL. EUROPEAN 2017 SHOW

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COUNTERPARTS

We manage to grab some sit down time with Brendan Murphy, frontman of Counterparts, in Cardiff before their show with Polar and Napoleon (Check out our review!). Being the only original member left we ask Brendan about the new album *You're Not You Anymore*, line up changes and who's more dependant on Counterparts...

Your lyrics are always very honest and open, even vulnerable, is 'You're Not You Anymore' your most personal record yet?

I think in a way yeah, *Tragedy Will Find Us* is more on the vulnerable side of things but I think *You're Not You Anymore* is the most introspective. I think it's the one where I'm covering a lot of topics about myself and changes that I've been through personally and stuff like that whereas a lot of the other records have been like these things have happened to me, these things have happened and this ones more like me realising certain things about myself that I didn't know a couple years ago. I wouldn't say more personal, they're all fairly personal but I think this

ones definitely more introspective I'd say, that's probably the word I would use...I think (laughs).

You guys don't take yourselves too seriously on social media or in interviews from what I've seen as well, do you think that's helped people connect with your band and does it separate the seriousness of the lyrical themes from your songs and everyday life as well?

Yeah I think it does, in terms of connecting with people that it's a lot easier to approach somebody and want to, anybody would be more able to approach somebody and have a conversation with them if they knew that they were kind of goofy and being funny and not like some serious person. But yeah for us, for me specifically the way that when it comes to writing lyrics that's where I focus my seriousness and I don't really see it too much in other places in my life because I'm just like well, I have one outlet where I can actually be serious and be like hey I'm not actually making any jokes like I'm really talking about something. But I think

because I have that one thing I'm able to be more of a relaxed person and I'm able to crack jokes and be a funny guy in every other aspect of my life.

With line up changes happening between the majority of releases does it make the writing process harder starting again or is it exciting to have fresh people and ideas?

Umm a bit of both honestly when you've had as many member changes as we have I think it's definitely like, I always know its gonna be fine I mean I know we're gonna have to practice with somebody else before we say like okay yeah you're in our band like if somebody came to practice with us and they couldn't play the songs we'd have to be like umm no like you can't be in the band anymore. But the one thing I've found is that when people sort of get Counterparts overall vibe and then it sort of takes on its own identity if that makes sense. We're passed the point of trying to sound like other bands I think like we know what Counterparts needs to sound like and I think that as other people come into the equation and you know we've had members leave and stuff especially founding members and members that do a lot of the writing it is exciting being able to write with people who are basically coming in with an outsider perspective cause you know Blake for example we've toured with Blake we've known him for years in other bands so you know he was never like in Counterparts and saw the inner workings of the band right so I think that it's exciting because he's coming into it and writing for the band and saying in my mind this is what I think Counterparts should sound like and then me being the original member and I've been around for the whole time I can sort of be like yeah I agree with that I think this is a cool direction. I think as long as we keep that sort of formula, we'll be good, we'll always sound like Counterparts. I think if we wanted to, we're all on the same page that if we wanted to change our sound and have a very very noticeable change we'd probably just break up and start another band and then just do that cause I feel that makes more sense than trying to convince everybody I know it's so different but its sick please. I would just be like nah fuck it we'll break up and start over and start this new band and everybody will know its like oh it's the Counterparts guys but its not Counterparts. But yeah its easier now like back in the day when we had people leave it was always like a crazy stress like what the fuck are we gonna do? How are we gonna find people? I mean now we know so many people and have met so

many people through touring and we see that kids will do cover videos and put them on the internet and its like shit you can play it, you can definitely play the song. While I don't think that anybody in the band is gonna be quitting any time soon, you never know you have to be ready for it and at the same time I think we've got the final line up, I think, we'll see...unless somebody changes their mind tomorrow which is fine (laughs).

We're in Cardiff today at Clwb Ifor Bach a venue you've played on your previous two UK headline tours, do you have a special affinity with this place or is it just coincidence that this has happened?

I don't think anything really stood out like holy shit, there wasn't some crazy thing that happened in Cardiff its just like we've been playing here forever and the shows have always been awesome. We like the city, the area the clubs in is really cool and there's lots of places to eat lots of bars to go to and a lot of fun to have and shit so whenever we're doing a headliner the venues sick so its like yeah we'll do Cardiff absolutely, it'd kinda be dumb not to if we're already here doing a UK tour. We'll always be around here for sure its sick.

On this record you've worked on and integrated your clean singing more into your songs, however they are layered with your harsher vocal style. Was there ever a point during the writing process where you had all clean singing parts and do you think we'll ever see that side of Counterparts more in the future?

Umm I don't really know. Well, the first part of the question when it comes to the clean singing on its own there wasn't a point where we could listen, I mean we could always go back and listen to the actual raw tracks and just mute the screaming vocals and hear how it sounds but, I think that the more vocal layers that you have the more full it sounds. While I don't think theres gonna be any times where its just me singing and nothing else I think there'll always be some layers underneath it or Trey and Tyler doing some backing stuff but that may just be because I'm not too confident with singing yet you know because it is really hard. Screaming is fairly easy but actually trying to record singing is like fucked you know trying to nail notes and doing a run of notes in a row is something I've never done till this record so it's definitely like oh wow this is this takes a lot of work. It is something I do wanna get better at so who knows. You never know I may

have a really good voice in me somewhere that I can tap into and use more but yeah I'm not really sure. I think its just nerve wracking like playing shows and having to worry like oh did I sing that right did I mess up? Whereas where I'm screaming I'm just like whatever it sounds like a guy yelling so its fine you know? But yeah I would like to do it more I just, I think in order for us to go more in that direction I would just have to get like really good at it, like as good as I am at screaming and I dunno if thats possible for me at this point in my life.

You're coming back to the UK and Europe early next year on the Architects tour which is hitting some massive venues including London's Alexandra Palace, have you thought about how you will tackle these shows?

I have but it always comes down to the same thing like we were kinda talking about it yesterday we were just like what are we gunna do when we're playing and there's gunna be 5 to 10 thousand people watching us? Its crazy but I just kinda zoom out and go well, we're just gunna do what we do and if they like it they like it if they don't like it then fuck it you know? So I don't think we're gunna go get too crazy and do a bunch of shit that we've never done like I think if anything we'll just give that ten thousand people a Counterparts show and then that way they can determine whether do they like this band or not. It's nice opening up for bigger bands and stuff because you get a lot of people hear and see your band who would normally never check you out so its cool but at the same time I want people to leave being like I like that Counterparts band, not like oh the band that opened for Architects is pretty sick you know what I mean? I definitely wanna leave an impression with them of like we're Counterparts this is what we do, this is what we think that we're good at and this is us basically, this is what you're gunna get when you come see our band and hopefully everyone in the room is like yeah this is tight I fuck with this or you know if there are people that are like yeah this isn't for me then whatever it's no big deal.

Okay my final question who needs Counterparts more you or the fans?

I dunno thats actually a really good question I've never been asked anything like that and thats actually sick so thank you first of. I think its pretty even, it can go both ways I do think if Counterparts broke up I would be fine, I think I would find

something in the same vain or like something in the music industry type thing that I could do so I think I would be okay but I don't know if I would enjoy as much as this. Even now I'm singing in another band it's kinda like Counterparts is my main band it has been my main band for 10 years basically so its like it's kinda scary thinking that one day this may not exist anymore, seemingly with the fans who like the band I think that initially they may be like oh well that sucks I love the band I'm never gunna get to see them play again but I think that in time people will move on and get over it. But then again at the same time its like I still enjoy doing this and I think that we would do it even if we weren't doing as well as we are now, so maybe I do need Counterparts more than the fans do...just a little bit cause I think that it kinda gives me purpose if that makes sense? It gives me purpose in the world like okay this is the cool thing I'm contributing, this is my contribution to the world and my mark that I'm trying to leave as Brendan Murphy. But yeah it's really tough I dunno I think its a really good balance I think that either way if Counterparts stopped I think on our end and on the fans side of things I think there'd be a decent amount of not devastation but I think it would shake people up a lot you know...but let's hope it doesn't happen soon. We're already talking about writing again so we'll do at least another record I dunno if it's gunna suck or if it's gunna be sick but I would like to think it's gunna be sick cause if we wrote something that sucked we'd probably just go yeah we're done see ya (laughs). But yeah that was a good question, shit I like that.

Thanks, that's normally what I try and end with. Sometimes it's really cut and dry with people like its well if I don't do this then thats it or like we're a new band so us.

Yeah I dunno its tough to say really...I don't think there would be anybody legitimately like what the fuck am I gunna do with my life now that my favourite bands broken up but I think that for me if this is broken up I would have that that the fuck am I gunna do with my life now thing. I think both sides would get over it but yeah...I dunno its tough...I don't wanna think about it fuck it (laughs) we'll be a band forever I'll die before the band does.

Words & photo by Joshua Clarke

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KNOCKED LOOSE

On a drab Sunday in Bristol we meet up with new boys on the block Knocked Loose, the hottest band in hardcore right now. We make our way to the top of the bus they're sharing with Comeback Kid and sit down with Bryan (vocals) and Isaac (guitar) to chat about their debut album, the future and what old school hardcore bands they wish to tour with...

Why do you think the hardcore scene has taken to you so well from bands to the fans? It seems like everyone is talking about you guys since the release of *Laugh Tracks*.

Bryan - I think that we just tried our hardest to stay as busy as we could so that it was really hard to not notice us, like we took every tour that we got offered, we just stayed on the road consistently so that no matter where you were looking you saw our name and I think that helped a lot.

Isaac - Yeah ever since 2015 we've been touring consistently, in 2015 it was almost every month that our name was out there and we crossed so many states in such a small amount of time so I think that just proves that if you play out and you have that drive to play out and you do that people are gonna respond to it.

Following on from that you've been on the road non stop since the release of the album, have you ever felt burnt out or is it all still new and exciting for you?

Bryan - I think its still new and exciting but something that I have to consistently remind myself of is like, like doing it so much and so consistently back to back there are days when it just feels like normal, like oh its just another day waking up, loading in, sound checking blah blah. I have to remind myself that two years ago I would've killed to be in the position I am now. So I definitely try my hardest not to take it for granted its still very exciting. Like the fact that we're over here for the second time is insane, I never thought we would've came over here once let alone twice...so yeah kinda both. There's definitely days where I'm checked out I'm ready to be home I'm homesick, I'm missing my parents, my girlfriend, my brothers but like at the same time I'm like holy shit I'm in Europe so I just need to take full advantage while I'm over here.

Isaac - I try to live in that dream state I don't really... there's definitely things that I miss when I'm not home, my girlfriend and my parents, but I definitely think in the grand scheme of things...look at where

you are, look at where we are right now, we're in Europe playing shows for a living now, that's absolutely insane and there's so many people who would kill to be in the position. So whenever that time comes when you're like oh I'm really tired and miss everything you just take, I just take one step back and say wait a second, I'm in wherever I'm in I'm in Germany or I'm in Belgium or I'm in the UK and I'm playing a show tonight and there's people at that show that care about what I'm playing and a couple years ago I was in my living room writing the stuff that I'm playing now for so many people. So like there are days where it gets tiring just like anything like any other job or anything like that, but if you take one step back and actually look at whats going on you get right back into it.

Bryan you mentioned in an interview on the Jasta show that you're worried about writing the follow up to Laugh Tracks, is that something thats shared by the rest of the band and have you written anything yet?

Bryan - We've kinda written a little bit but I think that we haven't really dove into it and I think that all of us are nervous and very much anticipating what we come up with next, it's not so much we don't think we can do it we're just excited to see what we end up doing. We've talked a lot about where we wanna go with the album and it's known that Laugh Tracks did way better then we thought it was going to so like to me there is definitely that thought in the back of my head like we have to bring it, we have to make sure we give people another record that they like and hopefully like more than Laugh Tracks. But when we started writing I was like I got to the point where I was like I can't do that because when I wrote Laugh Tracks like I didn't think that anybody was gonna hear it so I was writing what I wanted to write we were writing what we wanted to play and I think thats gonna be something we have to accept going into the new record is that we can't write a record we think people want to hear we have to write the record that we want to play.

Isaac - We're still very much in the, like he said writing has been done there has been some delving into it but we're still very much figuring out like what our sound is for the next record, not that it's gonna be drastically different but just figuring out what we can pull off and the new things to try without going to far out there. And like he said it's not nervous as in us doubting ourselves it's just we literally don't know what the outcome is gonna be

yet cause obviously you don't know till the finished product is there so ya know we're just slowly working on creating a sound that we're passionate about, that we believe in just like with Laugh Tracks. I'm not sure how long it's gonna take or how hard it's gonna be exactly yet but we're nervous but also really excited to see how it turns out.

You're taking out Terror on tour who are hardcore veterans, if you could bring back any defunct hardcore band to tour with who would it be?

Bryan - ...There's so many. Disembodied is up there.

Isaac - That's probably mine to.

Bryan - That's probably the one that makes the most sense.

Isaac - If it was for us to tour with that's probably a dream of ours.

Bryan - If I could see Disembodied every night I'd freak out. Martyr AD, I'm trying to think of bands that make sense for us to tour with. I would definitely have to stick with those two. Disembodied and Martyr AD.

Seeing as you guys have been on tour during Thanksgiving whats the one thing you miss the most about being away during the holidays?

Bryan - Thanksgiving is a hard one for me to miss I get real bummed out whenever I'm not home for Thanksgiving. I think that we've missed it the past three years...but yeah just for personal reasons I don't like being gone for Thanksgiving but other than that we don't miss too many important ones. We might miss birthdays and anniversaries, Halloween which I don't care about (laughs) now that I'm an adult all I do for Halloween is hand out candy anyway. Valentine's Day...small ones, Thanksgiving is the only big one thats acceptable to miss cause we're never gonna miss Christmas you know what I mean you just don't tour around Christmas, so yeah Thanksgiving is probably the biggest one we're allowed to miss so that always sucks.

Isaac - Same here like I do a bunch of family shit when it comes to Thanksgiving, it's really cool to be with your family on Thanksgiving. But at the same time Christmas is my favourite holiday and I'm always super happy during that and that time

of year and like you said we're always home so that's cool.

Bryan - I love Christmas.

Isaac - We're all looking forward to getting home and spending Christmas with our families and girlfriends and all that.

Finally is there anything you can tell us about whats in store for Knocked Loose in 2018?

Bryan - Just the headliner we really wanna promote the headliner as much as we can, March in the States and two shows in Canada, we've been talking about it a lot we're trying to make it the best show that it can be so that it's not just the same Knocked Loose set you've seen a million times. We've been touring a lot so chances are every place that we're playing on the headliner we've already played so we wanna make sure we give them a different experience and not just the same old 25 minute Knocked Loose set.

Isaac - Yeah I'm sure we'll have a few different things to look forward to next year but I think as far as Knocked Loose goes the headliner is gonna be a representation on where things are gonna go live show wise like we're trying to mark that tour as a change for the band as far as making a new set, just throwing some new stuff in there some curveballs so that people aren't just seeing what they've already seen. Especially if you're in the States or Canada that is what we're most focused on right now.

Bryan - And we'll be back over here doing some of the Impericon fests, we're doing Graspop in the summer and I'm sure we're gonna try and work out any other opportunities to come back over here as well just so that we don't wait too long to come back.

Interview by Joshua Clarke



ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2017

ALICE HODDINOTT

1. Creeper - Eternity, In Your Arms

Those of you who are avid Elite readers will know that I'm pretty obsessed with Creeper, and this obsession reached new heights after the band released Eternity, In Your Arms at the start of the year. Firstly, for a debut album it is absolutely flawless; it showcases Creeper's talents, from the punk punches of Poison Pens to the country-esque female led Crickets to the theatrical and effervescent Down Below, it really is an album that sparkles from start to end. It's earned the band critical acclaim in a scene which needed a breath of moody Disney-tinged punk and it's earned them a whole cult of fans who only adore them more and more with every listen of E,IYA. 2017 has left Creeper as one of the best bands around, and I'm willing to fight anyone who disagrees.



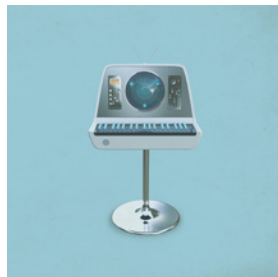
2. Marilyn Manson - Heaven Upside Down

Everyone's favourite weirdo, Marilyn Manson, FINALLY release Heaven Upside Down at the end of this year. Originally to be titled SAY10 and released on Valentine's Day, Manson kept fans waiting until November for this delectable 10 track album full of more-ish treats. Heaven Upside Down sees Manson amalgamate all the best elements of his back catalogue to create a dark, alluring and ever so sexy eargasm. Its Manson back at his best, so here's to an epic Download return in 2018!



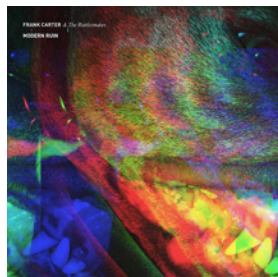
3. Enter Shikari - The Spark

As a long-time fan of Enter Shikari, hearing that The Spark was going to be somewhat of a concept album, I was a little nervous. And then I heard Live Outside and Undercover Agents and I was convinced this album was going to be one to forget. Alas, after one full listen I was enamoured and moved by an album that is relatable as an individual human as well as a human in an ever-changing society. Every song has a sprinkle of magic and I believe The Spark is one of the most important albums of my time.



4. Frank Carter and the Rattlesnakes - Modern Ruin

The day I listened to Modern Ruin I believe I titled it a masterpiece... In hindsight, it's not quite the masterpiece I thought it was as it's been pushed down my list by three superior albums. However, it is still an incredible album showcasing a more mature and developed Frank Carter and the Rattlesnakes. It is as tender as it is ballsy and brash, and the marriage of these two vibes throughout its entirety makes it a stand out album amongst a year of sterling releases.



5. Brutus - Burst

In preparation for this year's 2000 Trees festival, I came across Brutus and I was instantly captivated by what I heard. Burst is a niche yet very impressive album which highlights Brutus as ones to watch. It plays with a genre which you feel you know too well to enjoy the tangent Brutus take you on, yet you can't help but let it encompass you. If this is what they can accomplish with a debut, heaven knows what they'll bring us in the future!



ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2017

DOMINIC GEORGE

1. Thundercat – Drunk

You know Stephen ‘Thundercat’ Bruner’s work. Session bassist of choice for a not-inconsiderable spattering of household names, Drunk sees many of them returning the favour in the shape of guest appearances; Kenny Loggins(!), Pharrell Williams and Wiz Khalifa, alongside regular ‘cat-collaborators Kendrick Lamar and Flying Lotus all contribute their talents to Bruner’s unmistakably bold jazz-fusion-flavoured R&B compositions. Smart and polished vocalisation all over tracks like A Fan’s Mail and Inferno accompany jagged and fresh bass lines, and throughout the album Thundercat commits to an organic groove that is quirky without sounding contrived, showcasing all the beautiful jazz-influenced harmony and thoughtful structuring that has become a signature of Bruner’s sound.

2. Elder – Reflections of a Floating World

Weighing in at an average of ten minutes apiece, the six songs on Reflections of a Floating World are bursting with prodigious psychedelic riffs and disparate atmospheres with a minimal but not-inconsequential splash of monumental reverb-soaked vocals. Blistering opener Sanctuary is very much a harbinger for the rest of the record, tailing into a landscape of intertwined and constantly developing motifs.

3. Julien Baker – Turn Out The Lights

The perfect follow-up to 2015’s Sprained Ankle, Baker’s second studio album is, as before, a cathartic experience. Heavy lyrics tackling religion, acceptance and mental illness atop a more diverse but still sparse, atmospheric instrumentation alongside Baker’s mastery of emotional and musical dynamics engenders rapturous crescendos and heartbreakingly potent and restrained reticence.

4. Slaughter Beach, Dog – Birdie

Ex-Modern Baseball mastermind Jake Ewald returns with a more retrospective sophomore; soft vintage-tinted production and tasteful harmonic homage to 60s pop-rock sets Birdie apart from previous efforts while retaining that witty, self-deprecating humour and warm nostalgic storytelling so sorely missed by Modern Baseball fans.

5. Pallbearer – Heartless

Gloomy and doomy, this third full-length from the Arkansas prog-metal quartet showcases a more developed, matured body of work that is as pensive and introspective as it is heavy and solemn. Much like contemporaries Mastodon, Pallbearer continue fearlessly to carve their own path in order to stand out.



ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2017

JONATHAN MILLER

1. Truth and Rights – Lies and Slights

“Who?” you ask. Truth and Rights is a band lead by Eddie Sutton, singer of NY crossover legends, Leeway. This band has actually been around for a long time and the debut album, Lies and Slights was apparently recorded and ready some years ago but never saw the light of day..until finally being put on bandcamp this year. As one of the weirder people who actually loves Leeway’s more diverse sounding last album, Open Mouth Kiss, Lies and Sights acts as a good follow up for me. It incorporates the groovier direction they were taking but also throws in some straight up New York hardcore sing-alongs and thrashy riffs. Eddie’s vocals are just so unique and prove that you can still sing clean and sound hardcore as hell!



2. The Driers – Sad Party

Sad Party, the debut full length by Tel Aviv trio The Driers, flirts with the likes of disorienting indie, alternative rock and even proto-punk; sometimes within the same song. Although all 10 songs on here are toe-tappers, there’s still a bit of diversity among them. Squeeze is a personal highlight; it teases you into thinking it’s a sweet indie-pop song before erupting into an almost Weezer-meets-Violent Soho style chorus which conjures up images of long-haired teens jamming out their angst in someone’s garage. The album’s title track has one of the most infectious choruses which makes perfect use of breathtaking male-female vocal harmonies, a trait prominent throughout the band’s work.



3. Body Count – Bloodlust

Body Count’s 6th studio album, Bloodlust, impressed a lot of people this year with its Slayer influences. There’s even a cover of Slayer’s Raining Blood/Postmortem which could be considered better than the originals due to Ice T’s more aggressive delivery and the band’s musical precision. Body Count’s iconic rap-hardcore-thrash flavour has not been totally lost on here, as first single No Lives Matter, album closer Black Hoodie and the album’s title track all come across as natural progressions of the classic Body Count sound. Although I did criticise it for some unoriginality, it’s still one of the best albums this year.



4. CJ Wildheart – Blood

CJ Wildheart’s new album, Blood, harks back to the edgier and more hectic side of previous band The Wildhearts, with fast stomping drums and distorted vocals. Despite the music’s aggressive tone, there is still a hint of Wildhearts cheekiness and humour, both musically and lyrically. 50 Percent Indian is a favourite, being the closest to The Wildhearts’ classic sound, which I love. It also stands out as the most personal, touching upon experience of racial prejudice and being proud of who you are. Blood is a surprisingly exciting, electrifying and heavy album for a veteran who most would expect to have slowed down.



5. Wednesday 13 – Condolences

Wednesday 13’s new album, Condolences, surprised me with its amount of more hard-hitting hardcore/thrash riffs than expected. The original aspects of Wednesday 13 are still there, both lyrically and atmospherically, but seem to be a lot maturer in sound. Cruel To You is the only track on here which harks back to the more horror-glam-punk sound he used to be known for. Condolences may lack lyrical depth in places but is an enjoyable listen with many infectious choruses and riffs which will satisfy fans and surprise others.



ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2017

JOSHUA CLARKE

1. The Menzingers - After The Party

This album has not left my turntable or been too long away from my laptop speakers since its release all the way back in February. This is a piece of absolute magic, it's bursting with charm, hooks and packed with some of the best choruses in recent years. Each song is better than the last and varied in style which makes this such an interesting and enjoyable listen. The title track gets me pumped up and wanting to sing "EVERYBODY WANTS TO GET FAMOUS" every. damn. time.

2. Stray From The Path - Only Death Is Real

One of the most innovative and consistent bands in the world of hardcore and metal has well and truly taken the Rage Against The Machine comparisons and made themselves just as important in 2017. A band for the people who NEED to be heard and never ever hold back as they attack even their President. Once again they give us some amazing mosh calls and response, check out Plead The Fifth and Bryan Garris of Knocked Loose guest spot on All Day & a Night.

3. Blood Youth - Beyond Repair

Steadily building their stock throughout 2016 with touring as much as they could Blood Youth released their debut album earlier on this year to mass acclaim from the press to the pit and they've been hard to ignore ever since. Guitarist Chris Pritchard's love for nu metal and 90s riffs is evident but with a modern flavour which interests those new and old to our world whilst lyrically it's a very personal effort from Kaya Tarsus.

4. Brutus - Burst

I'd heard the name a lot before I bothered to check them out which I did on a period of down time whilst shooting 2000 Trees and they instantly made an impact on me. I haven't gone a few days without throwing this on and having seen them since at Arctangent they were even better. Belgian three piece with drummer Stefanie Mannaerts being the driving force vocally as well. All three members have different interests and Burst is a varied and unbelievably brilliant piece of work.

5. Counterparts - You're Not You Anymore

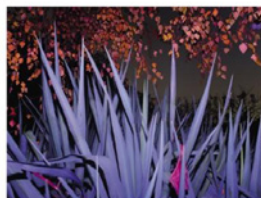
One of my favourite bands from the melodic hardcore scene and they've released another solid record in You're Not You Anymore. An introspective record lyrically from original member Brendan Murphy and a focus more on fluid songs and the album overall as a theme. Bouquet is instantaneous and the title track gets to me every time.



STRAY FROM THE PATH



BRUTUS BURST



ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2017

ROBERT BURNS

1. Jamie Lenman – Devolver

A true original in this country's music scene, Devolver is a swirling, diverse insight into Lenman's mind with lyrical themes encompassing anxiety, depression, his own sense of self, and shots at the music industry that will be familiar ground to long time Reuben fans. This is a daring and diverse work, taking in post hardcore, alt rock, disco, and a relentless industrial stomp. If you can get around the jarring sonic differences track to track the album will absolutely sink its claws into you.

2. The Wonder Years – Burst and Decay

The prospect of The Wonder Years reimagining some of their best loved songs in a new format was an enticing one. It is hard not to be at least somewhat disappointed with the lack of imagination put into these versions, particularly given some of the inventiveness on display in Campbell's side project Aaron West and the Roaring Twenties. However, the quality of the songs still signs through and there is still a lot to love here.

3. Lost Ground – Absent

An inventive exercise in melodic math rock songwriting. Less of the emphasis on the extreme vocals than the bands previous releases which has resulted in a more focussed and realised vision. This neatly toes the line between catchy and technicality and is well worth your time.

4. HECK – BGs and Rarities Vol. 1

This collection of B Sides and rarities from the sadly now defunct HECK provides a neat career retrospective neatly showcasing the development of tracks that appeared on debut LP Instructions to oddities such as their off the wall cover of Iron Maiden's The Trooper. HECK will be sadly missed.

5. Donnie Willow - Exhibition

Bold, inventive, excellent production. A bold release from Scotland's Donnie Willow. Reminiscent of early noughties British alt rock stalwarts such as Reuben and Biffy Clyro. Songs weave in and out of riffs into huge choruses, and as the EP is only 4 tracks long it leaves you holding out for more.





Five Finger Death Punch - A Decade Of Destruction
Eleven Seven Music | Release Date: 1st December 2017

Not every band is lucky enough to reach a point in their lifespan in which they have the opportunity to release a greatest hits album, in the age of Spotify playlists, a lot of people would question it's legitimacy. But just like an elegant sculpture of ice at a Saudi wedding: it's as useless as it is impressive.

The album opens with one of two new tracks *Trouble*, an undeniable thrill for any FFDP fan as it blends seamlessly with their old performance and production style. All is as crisp and clear as you'd expect, with no surprises or innovation – if pop-metal were to ever be a sub genre, then FFDP are both the flagship and the pioneers.

With 16 tracks averaging at around 4 minutes, this will likely keep any beer chugging bro party occupied long enough before they each succumb to gravity and the floor, but there doesn't seem to be much of a demand for this flavour of metal. *A Decade Of Destruction* is nothing more than a firm handshake and courteous nod to the aged metal of the naughties.

Words by **Dylan Cameron**



Polaris - The Mortal Coil
Sharpstone Records | Release Date: 3rd November 2017

Another hotly tipped Australian export comes in the form of *Polaris*, a band who have toured relentlessly for the past three years and played with some of their hometown peers in the likes of *Northlane*, *Hellions* and the big daddies in *Parkway Drive*. But now all eyes and ears are firmly set on their new album, *The Mortal Coil*, and what it will do for them from here on out.

'*Lucid*' bounces and grooves right off the bat and deals out *Jamie Hails* more hardcore vocal approach over the top. The vocals are one of the key aspects that sets *Polaris* away from the rest of the pack whilst the guitar tone and riffs sit more comfortably in djent, metalcore territory it's the ferocity at which *Hails* delivers his lyrics that makes this an interesting proposition. *Jake Steinhauer* on bass and clean vocals does a great job of complementing *Hails* and driving the choruses, however the harsh/clean dynamic does wear off around the halfway point with *Hails* actually providing the more memorable hooks. "I found my love and let it kill me" on '*Lucid*' and "The devil's in the details" on '*Consume*' stick around inside your head on repeat for days on end. The record does sit on the average side of the fence during its second half but there's plenty here to get your teeth into and *Polaris* are definitely ones to keep an eye on.

Words by **Joshua Clarke**



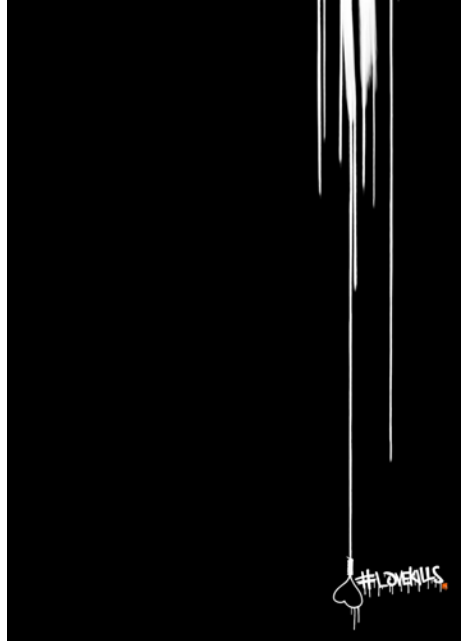


Quicksand - Interiors

Epitaph Records | Release Date: 11th November 2017

New York post hardcore heroes Quicksand were firm favourites with the majority of fans of nineties alternative music and had been much missed since they split up in the late 1990s. The band (fronted by Gorilla Biscuits man Walter Schreifels) combined a post hardcore sound with elements of metal and a knack for catchy songs and emotional lyrics that made them heroes when they were around and beyond and since they split, fans have been aching for a reunion. The news that the band had gotten back together in 2012 was greeted with vast joy although it has been a long wait for the band to release any new material, the bands new album Interiors (Quicksand's third following the classics that are 1993's Slip and 1995's Manic Compression) has been well worth the twenty two year wait. The band pretty much start where they left off, with their songwriting abilities and delivery of their songs sounding as impeccable as ever. Schreifels has kept busy over the years with a variety of projects (Rival Schools, Dead Heavens, a reunited Gorilla Biscuits and solo work amongst them) and his great output continues on Interiors. Songs like the opening Illuminant and Under The Screw sound urgent and vital while dreamier songs like > and Cosmonauts give depth to the Quicksand sound and these are all highlights on an album packed full of them, in fact the latter two demonstrate how big an influence Quicksand are on Deftones amongst other bands, the fact that Quicksand bassist Sergio Vega also now plays bass in Deftones is evident here with his recognisable playing upping the ante in both bands. Interiors is a superb record and a worthy addition to Quicksand's musical arsenal and the band sound as good in 2017 as they did in their heyday and hopefully it won't take as long for another album as it did with this one.

Words by Gavin Brown





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Review by James Hall

XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 2

Switch

With the original Xenoblade Chronicles, Monolith Soft took it upon themselves to redefine the JRPG, bringing a gigantic open world and fast-past battle system to the Wii. That game was a masterpiece of design, if one that stretched the hardware of the platform far more than it could really handle. And now Monolith Soft is back with a sequel that aims to do the same all over again.



Xenoblade Chronicles 2 casts you in the boots of Rex, a plucky young salvager who lives on the back of a giant creature that swims through a sea of clouds. Such is the unusual world of Alrest; where humanity lives upon (or in some cases, within) the bodies of huge creatures called Titans, who spend their days swimming in the Cloud Sea. Rex earns money for his family by diving into the sea for scrap, and whilst his cheerful optimism can get a little overbearing, it's hard not to empathise with the boy, who dutifully

sends most of what he earns back to his family. He gets roped into working with a group of mercenaries who are looking to explore an ancient ship in the hope of finding a legendary sword, and inadvertently awakens Pyra, the flame-haired personification of the weapon, in the process.

“IF THE CONCEPT OF BEING FOLLOWED AROUND BY A SUBSERVIENT BEING TROUBLES YOU, DON'T WORRY - THE GAME DEVOTES A GOOD DEAL OF IT'S BROAD STORYLINE TACKLING THAT VERY ISSUE.”

From there the pair set out to find the mythical world of Elysium that supposedly exists atop the gigantic World Tree. They're soon joined by a gaggle of unlikely allies, including a welsh catgirl and an annoying furball - I won't spoil the other party members you acquire here - but suffice to say they're a ragtag bunch of surprisingly likeable JRPG characters that mostly defy the usual tropes of the genre. It's a good job, as you'll be saddled with them over the course of the games 80+ hour main story, which somehow manages to retain it's impetus and keep the twists and turns coming throughout, despite a relatively slow start.

Unique to the Xenoblade Chronicles 2 world are Blades, a race of creatures that can channel ether

into powerful abilities. Blades must be bonded to a Driver, and are bound to follow their Driver's desires even though they possess personalities and thoughts of their own. If the concept of being followed around by a subservient being troubles you, don't worry - the game devotes a good deal of its broad storyline tackling that very issue.



In gameplay terms, this means you're always accompanied by one of a handful of Blades, each of which has their own powers and abilities. More can be obtained by finding Core Crystals, though most are near identical, albeit with some minor differences in weapon choices and elemental alignments. Some rarer ones are unique, however, with distinctive appearances, personalities and side-quests linked to their progression. Your choice of Blade is important, as they confer exploration and combat abilities as well, fulfilling the roles of tank, attacker, or healer. You'll only ever control a party of three characters, but with each accompanied by their own Blade and many enemies fighting in groups the battles can get quite hectic. Combat itself is simple, on the surface - you can only directly control one character, and moving into range of an enemy will cause them to auto-attack. These attacks build up energy for your Special arts, assigned to the face buttons. Using Arts then charges up elemental attacks, which can be combined in three stages to inflict damage and seal enemy abilities, to prevent them from, say, calling for backup. Pulling off these moves imparts elemental orbs on your opponent, which you can then exploit with a Chain Attack when your party's meter is full, bursting them by using opposing elements to inflict even more damage. Oh, you can also chain status ailments from your standard attacks as well; some attacks will inflict Break status, which can then be exploited to cause your enemy to Topple, and then Launched into the air, before being Smashed down to

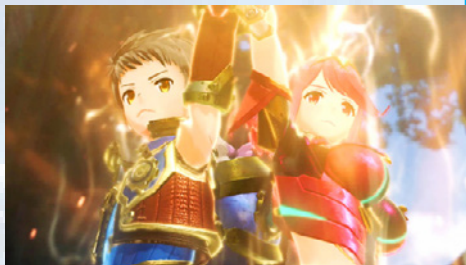
the ground. It all adds up to a combat system that is far deeper and more strategic than it initially seems, but which offers a lot of variety and proves hugely satisfying.

“EXPLORING ALL OF THE VAST WORLD MONOLITH HAS CREATED WILL TAKE A LOT OF DEDICATED EFFORT - I PLOUGHED WELL OVER 100 HOURS INTO THE GAME, AND I STILL FEEL LIKE I HAVE A LOT TO DISCOVER.”

If all of that sounds complex, well, we're only just beginning. You also need to consider the Trust and Affinity between Driver and Blade, as that increases the bond between the two and unlocks more skills and abilities on each Blade's unique advancement tree, many of which have varied and time-consuming quests associated with them. Characters gain experience from combat, but also earn experience to spend on improving weapon skills, earn affinity points to enhance their stats, and can equip gear items and pouch consumables to further improve their abilities. Oh, and your blades can have their weapons upgraded and have their own gear slots for advancement crystals as well. And you can collect items in the field to use for cooking and side quests. And you can send your Blades off on mercenary missions, provided they have the right traits for the job. And you can salvage for more items. And buy shop items to improve the development of an area to earn new shop items and discounts, or even buy the deeds to a store to own it outright. In case it isn't clear by now, there are a lot of systems at play in Xenoblade Chronicles 2, all with linked mechanics, and whilst the game isn't always great at explaining them they are at least introduced gradually enough for you to be able to get a handle on them quickly enough. Mastering them all and exploring all of the



vast world Monolith has created will take a lot of dedicated effort - I ploughed well over 100 hours into the game, and I still feel like I have a lot to discover.



As has been the case with previous Monolith Soft games, there's a sense that their ambition far outstrips the technical abilities of their chosen console. Xenoblade Chronicles 2 can be a great looking game, with its gorgeous vistas stretching off into the horizon, lively character models and flashy special effects, but it comes at a cost. The game seems to employ a dynamic resolution scaler to help stabilise its performance, but pairs this with some awful filters that give the game a smeary look across most of the larger regions. Played portable, the effect is even more noticeable, and worse still XC2 often struggles to maintain a constant 30fps frame rate at times. There are a few questionable artistic design choices as well; nothing hugely detrimental, just that a few characters don't quite fit aesthetically with the rest of the bunch - most notably Pyra's implausible proportions, as well as a couple of the more outlandish Blade designs.

“THERE'S A SENSE THAT [THE DEVELOPER'S] AMBITION FAR OUTSTRIPS THE TECHNICAL ABILITIES OF THEIR CHOSEN CONSOLE. XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 2 CAN BE A GREAT LOOKING GAME, WITH IT'S GORGEOUS VISTAS STRETCHING OFF INTO THE HORIZON, LIVELY CHARACTER MODELS AND FLASHY SPECIAL EFFECTS, BUT IT COMES AT A COST.”

The sound design is more successful, with a sweeping, evocative soundtrack from series composer Yasunori Mitsuda, and again opts for a distinctly British localisation; Rex has a clear Lancashire twang, Mórág boasts a loose Glaswegian accent, and so on - its unusual, but adds a certain unique flair. The voice work isn't always brilliant or brilliantly directed, and there are a few characters

whose lines will grate on you (Tora, your furry Noapon ally, being by far the worst offender here) and you'll definitely tire of hearing Rex declare that he's going to teach every new enemy a thing or three, but they're strong enough when it counts and ably carry the story. A Japanese language track is available as free DLC, and is probably a better option.

Aside from the spotty performance, the only real criticism I can level at the game comes with its woeful map and navigation system. You're given a compass indicating the direction of your next objective, and a minimap, but the complex world design often makes finding a path to your destination difficult, and the minimap doesn't pan or scale enough to let you explore. It can make pathfinding a real chore, and resulted in a couple of situations where I spent almost an hour trying different paths to reach my objective. This is due to be fixed with a patch later this month, but for now it remains a very clumsy system. There are other niggles; the complex systems aren't introduced all that well, menu's are clunky, and some actions - like the Salvaging minigame, evaluating Merc mission reports, or opening new



Blade Cores - have slow animations that make these activities take far longer than they should.

None of the issues, however, could stop me from ploughing every moment of free time into Xenoblade Chronicles 2. I found its interlinking systems bewitching, and wanted to explore the world to see everything it had to offer. It's not perfect, but the gorgeous world design, strong character work, and engaging combat carry it through the rougher spots and make for one of the most engrossing JRPG's I've played in years.

GAMING: 2018 ROUNDUP

WE RUN DOWN THE BIGGEST GAMES
COMING OUR WAY IN 2018.

MONSTER HUNTER WORLD



The venerable Monster Hunter franchise is reborn with this gorgeous open world take on the series. It might not look like the Monster Hunter you remember, but all the series hallmarks are there.

DRAGON BALL FIGHTER Z



Playing this game feels more like watching an interactive anime - it's staggering how well Arc System Works has captured the essence of the classic series in this gorgeous, and surprisingly deep, fighting game.

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS



It's already been remastered in HD, but we're also getting a full remake of Shadow of the Colossus next year, and we can't wait to dive into its melancholy world one more time.

STREET FIGHTER 30TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION



Capcom is bundling all of the 2D Street Fighter games together for the first time in this 30th Anniversary collection, which features everything from the original Street Fighter, through the Alpha series and Street Fighter 3. No Street Fighter: The Movie: The Game, though.

LOST SPHEAR



The Studio that brought us the charming I Am Setsuna is back with another classic styled JRPG, and it looks set to charm and delight as much as their first title.

METRO EXODUS



The Metro series goes open world horror with its latest instalment, and it looks like this might be a fitting spiritual successor to the STALKER titles.

ANTHEM



BioWare still hasn't revealed much about its ambitious-looking Anthem, but it will be interesting to see how the game positions itself against elephant-in-the-room Destiny 2.

SEA OF THIEVES



Rare's colourful multiplayer Pirate adventure seems set to charm our hearts with its lively swashbuckling action and treasure hunting. Definitely one we're looking forward to trying out here at the Elite offices.

CODE VEIN



Some people are describing Namco's Code Vein as a crossover between Dark Souls and Vampire anime, which sounds just fine to us.

MECHWARRIOR 5



The granddaddy of 'mech games is back, and promises to take the series back to its tactical roots by setting you up as the leader of your own mercenary band. You'll have to manage your finances and forces as well as engage in the strategic combat the series is known for.

RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2



Okay, so there's a chance this one might slip from its anticipated 2018 release date, but it's still one of the biggest games on the horizon at the minute. Rockstar's return to the Wild West just can't come quickly enough.

SWITCH TRIDENT PRO-S CONTROLLER

Switch



The world of third party controllers is a bit of a minefield, to say the least. Things have stabilised over the last few years, with Sony and Microsoft far more picky over who gets to make controllers for their systems. But there are still some proper clunkers out there. And some real stars.

With the Switch, the market is a tricky one. Official Nintendo controllers are prohibitively expensive - the Pro controller costs £65, and a second pair of Joy-Cons will set you back £70. But there are companies out there offering cheaper alternatives.

One such company is Game Devil, a brand of Swedish wholesaler Game Outlet, which made its name in the peripherals market with some well-regarded PS4 controllers. With the Wireless Pro-S, the company is offering a wireless Pro Controller for the Switch for under £30. There has to be a catch, right?

Well, yes and no. On the one hand, the Pro-S does sacrifice the motion control and NFC components of the official Pro Controller, so you won't be able to wiggle the pad around to throw Cappy in Mario Odyssey or pair an Amiibo with it. But you do get vibration functions (not HD rumble, but good enough) and a selection of interchangeable D-Pads for you to customise the way the controller feels.

Aesthetically it's not the most appealing controller around. A nondescript black plastic shell with grey, slightly rubberised handgrips, analog sticks in the Dualshock configuration with red and blue coloured stalks for no discernible reason, and black face buttons. The Game Devil logo adorns the centre, as you might expect, though I did find myself questioning the designs of the symbols on the

face buttons - the Y and A are standard, but the X is replaced by a crossed arrows design and the B is replaced with a sideways trident. These fit the Game Devil brand, but they aren't easy to identify, and look really out of place with the standard lettering beside them. The buttons are, however, nice and responsive, with a pleasantly clicky feel that doesn't feel cheap. The analogue sticks are particularly good as well, with well-tuned resistance that makes fine control much easier than the Joy-Con analog stalks.

The shoulder buttons feel like they've been lifted straight from an Xbox 360 pad, with solid feeling bumper buttons and comfortable triggers, though I'm less sold on the layout of menu buttons - the + and - buttons are arranged in the centre of the pad, and beneath them are the Turbo and Share buttons, with the Home button centralised beneath them. I've yet to use the turbo function, though I'm sure there are some Switch games where the function is useful, but I've lost count of the amount of times I've hit the Share button and taken a screenshot when I meant to press +.

The interchangeable D-Pads are a great inclusion. You get the standard cross configuration, great for arcade type games where precision is key, a faceted circle rocker that makes quarter and half circles of the directions a breeze in fighting games, and a four-way rocker that sits as a bit of a cross between the two. All three work great, though I definitely preferred the faceted circle design personally.

Despite the price, nothing about the pad feels cheap or basic - even the merely functional looks don't detract too much - but there are a couple of notable drawbacks. You'll probably know already if the lack of motion control and NFC support is going to affect your gameplay, and if it is, well, you'll need to look elsewhere. It's also worth noting that whilst the controller does stay connected to the Switch, it can't turn the device on - you'll have to turn on the console then power up the controller. But these are small caveats for a controller that is otherwise absolutely solid; its responsive, feels sturdy, and the battery life is great. It might not quite be a match for the official Pro Controller, but it's more than a match for the Joy Cons and a Joy Con Grip, and has quickly become my go-to gamepad for the Switch.

8/10



Review by Callum Walker

TOWER 57

(PC)

Tower 57 is a fast paced retro style top down shooter whose over the top gun play is vaguely reminiscent of the Bitmap Brothers classic The Chaos Engine.

Developed by Pixwerk it sets itself in a Dieselpunk world where you as a member of an extraordinary task force and have to fight your way up Tower 57.



At its essence Tower 57 is fun, its silly and it is surprisingly hard. It is not quite the almost senseless run and gun of games like Metal Slug or Broforce. Enemies are dangerous from level 1 and continue to be throughout. Thanks to gun pickups and upgrades as well as damage modifiers for your body you can increase the potency of your character, which is one of 4 characters currently available. My favourite was without a doubt the Abraham Lincoln lookalike, for no other reason than shooting your way through a tower as Abe Lincoln never got boring.

Graphics wise it does exactly what it says on the tin, it respectfully recreates that retro look and feel and for that reason the game has a nostalgia element to it, to a time when games were simpler and arguably at times more fun and loot boxes didnt exist.

Gameplay wise as above it is a very simple game, indicative of the genre and period in gaming that this game is a throwback to. It is easy to get the hang of but does have nuance to it, which took me a while to get to grips with after being brutally killed repeatedly in the basements of Tower 57.

Overall this is a fun game to play if you are in a bit of a lull with any more modern games. Its a turn on and have a laugh sort of game that doesn't require long bouts of extreme focus.



7/10



Review by James Hall

BATTLE CHASERS: NIGHTWAR

(PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)

Funny how things come full circle, isn't it? Joe Madureira's 1998 comic series, *Battle Chasers*, was heavily inspired by the JRPGs of the PSX era. Almost twenty years later, that unfinished fantasy series has itself become a video game, one very clearly hammered out in the same forge as its inspirations.



Battle Chasers: Nightwar, then, is a turn-based RPG in the Japanese style, with a party of adventurers plucked from the pages of the comics. There's stoic warrior Garrison, orphan girl Gully, gentle-hearted war Golem Calibretto, buxom rogue Monika, and crusty sage Knolan. Their airship comes under attack at the start of the game, conveniently marooning them on a lost island and thus avoiding any potential conflict with the *Battle Chasers* comics. This largely works in the game's favour; we're presented with a neutral territory that fans of the comics won't be familiar with, and it gives the game chance to re-introduce its characters as Gully reunites with her companions. On the other hand, it means there's limited room for

character development amongst the heroes; the story the game tells has plenty of intrigue and deceit and grand evil schemes, but it never really feels like the characters are involved other than by happenstance.

That doesn't stop the story being engaging, nor does it mean that there aren't interesting characters within the plot, though it's the exploration and turn-based gameplay that are the clear forerunners in *Nightwar*. As with traditional JRPGs, the game is separated into three distinct modes: the overworld, which is an abstract, hand-drawn map which you move your party's icon around; Field screens, which are the 3D dungeon areas you explore; and fights, which are where you, well, fight. You'll spend most of your time in the various dungeons that litter the world, and they're pretty niftily designed. Each dungeon comprises a sequence of areas, but their layouts are randomised and there's a delicate balance to making sure your party has enough supplies and manages its allotment of HP and Mana as you progress through each one. You can also revisit previous dungeons on higher difficulties for an extra challenge or if you want to level up some of your lesser-used characters. Crucially, although the layouts are randomised, the individual areas are each handcrafted with some care, and never feel like they're being thrown together on-the-fly.

Whilst exploring you can switch between the three active characters in your party, and each

has their own special ability. Monika can sneak, Garrison can charge enemies, Calibretto can heal the party and so on; the abilities are never vital to making progress or in unlocking secret paths, which feels like a bit of a missed opportunity, but they do make each character feel a little different.

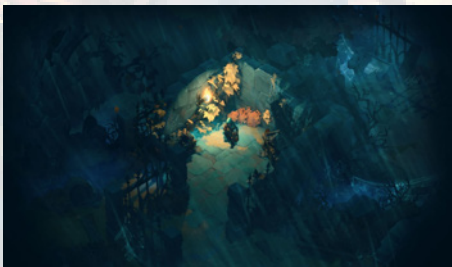


Combat is the meat of the game, and Battle Chasers adopts a traditional system with a few fun twists. Characters have the standard attack, defend, special ability and item commands, and can also unleash a Limit Break (hello, Final Fantasy) when you've taken (or dealt) enough damage. One neat addition is the 'overcharge' system; certain attacks will give your character an amount of temporary mana which can be used to cast spells; this temporary charge is lost at the end of the battle, but using it means you won't be eating into your reserves of mana. Choosing when to build up charge for your specials and when to burn your normal mana on attacks adds a welcome tactical edge, but it's the combination of buffs, debuffs and conditions that truly make the combat sing. Many character abilities confer debuffs on opponents - reducing their armour or magic resistance, for example - or granting allies temporary shields or hit bonuses. Many special abilities interact with these buffs and debuffs, dealing extra damage if an opponent is affected by certain ailments.

Battles are fun, and can be quite challenging at times due to an uneven levelling curve, but they can also be sluggish, with even basic attacks saddled with animations that take just a bit too long to finish up. Over the course of a dungeon, the game can often feel like a bit of a slog, especially as the dungeons get longer as the game progresses. This has the knock-on effect of diluting the story as well, which is further washed out when you throw in the game's surprisingly developed crafting elements and wanted missions. There's never a shortage of things to do, but they do come at the expense of having a central, driving storyline that you can plough through.

As you might expect, the visuals are heavily stylised,

and have a wonderful painted quality about them that very much captures Joe Madueira's art style - more so even than the Darksiders games - without compromising on graphical fidelity. There are loads of neat animation flourishes that add heaps of character to both enemies and allies alike, though the world map is little bare, with fairly simplistic icons representing major landmarks and features. The soundtrack is fittingly sweeping and moody, and whilst it rarely hits any major highs it never feels intrusive. The voice acting, on the whole, is fine, but I'm not sure some of the voices seem right for the characters - Calibretto and Knolan's voices, in particular, don't fit with the way the characters look at act to my mind, though the acting itself is solid. There are other frustrations, besides the diluted storyline, uneven difficulty and sluggish combat, but they don't derail the experience too much. There are issues with progression, certainly - it takes a long time to get enough experience to level up a character, and aside from a handful of passive bonuses there's no way to customise the skills and abilities of your heroes; they just unlock new powers as they level up. There's a variety of equipment, but there doesn't seem to be many different items for each character at any given level. Most infuriatingly, navigation on the world map is clumsy; there's an overview map that doesn't tell you the names of each region, and your objective marker doesn't appear on it either, so it's often difficult to judge where you need to be and how to get there.



None of that stops BattleChasers: Nightwar from being a likeable game, but it does result in a somewhat toothless experience. Nightwar is solid, enjoyable, and packed with character, but it doesn't really have anything to say or offer that would make it appeal to those outside the audience of the comic books. Does that matter? Possibly not, and if you're just after a way to get into the BattleChasers world or are in need of a new, classic style RPG, Nightwar will fit the bill adequately. It just won't leave you with much to remember afterwards.

6/10

SUPER LUCKY'S TALE



SUPER LUCKY'S TALE

Xbox One, PC

Anyone would think the 3D platformer was back en vogue. In this last year we've seen a new Mario, Banjo-Kazooie's spiritual successor Yooka-Laylee, a new Sonic, and the return of Bubsy the Bobcat. Whilst that last one might not have been overly welcome, it's hard to be too upset about the return of other disarmingly charming character platformers. So in step Microsoft, picking up publishing duties on Playful Corp's Super Lucky's Tale, the sequel to a not-very-well-known VR game. Oh, and it's launching alongside the Xbox One X, too.



As a torchbearer for the power of Microsoft's new console, Super Lucky's Tale probably isn't going to set the world on fire. That's not to say it looks bad - the cartoonish visuals are full of character and charm, and there are occasional moments of grandeur scattered throughout its whimsical environments. At 4K and in HDR, it's a wonderfully colourful game, but it's hardly a showcase, especially given its limited camera movement and small explorable worlds.

What it is, however, is a perfectly solid, carefully paced platform adventure. Titular hero, Lucky, might be one of the most instantly appealing mascot characters we've seen in a long time, and I'd challenge anyone not to 'aww' at his cute little on-all-fours running animation. He can jump, double jump, swish his tail around to stun enemies, and tunnel underground for treasures to collect, and all of these can be chained together to make for a very fluid control system. Lucky's jumps are a touch floaty, and the isometric camera can make some precision jumps trickier than they need to be, but on the whole the game controls well - far better than many of its contemporaries. The game is split into a series of worlds, each with multiple stages, and each guarded by one of villain



Jinx's feline henchmen. There are three main collectibles to, well, collect; coins, clovers, and letters - collect the five letters that spell Lucky's name in a given stage and you'll earn another clover. It's these clovers that are used to gauge

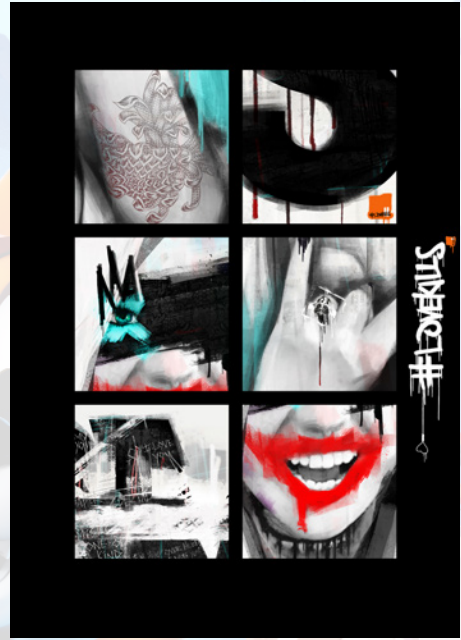
progress; later sections of each world can only be unlocked when the requisite amount of clovers has been collected from each of the sub-stages and challenges. There are far more clovers available in each world than you'll ever need to progress, which does go some way to encourage replayability for those who want to challenge themselves.



Most of the stages are straightforward 3D platforming affairs, with simple objectives to accomplish - collect 3 objects, destroy 3 items, and so on - but the challenge stages mix things up, with sliding puzzles, retro 2D levels, and forced runner sections. None of these live up to their name, though - in Lucky's Tale, the greatest challenge comes from putting up with the camera (which is limited to pivoting left and right from its default spot), and even that isn't much of a problem.



Still, even if Super Lucky's Tale isn't overly difficult, it does at least make it a perfect game for younger gamers, or players who want to relax in a bright, colourful world for a change. It's not a game that will stay with you, and Lucky himself is pretty one-note as the plucky little fox out to beat the bad guy. It's not going to shake the world or revolutionise the genre, but that was never its intent. It's charming, mechanically solid, and a delight to play. It's hard to find too much to complain about with that.



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Review by James Hall

SONIC FORCES

(PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)

It might be hard for some people to believe, but there were those of us that actually enjoyed the Sonic Adventure games. We were mostly wrong to, because they weren't really very good, but there was a certain charm about the blinding speed and larger than life worlds and characters that made them strangely appealing.



Sonic Forces, for better and for worse, is the new Sonic Adventure 2. It's fast and bombstic and loud and full of attitude, accompanied by a cheer-inducing soundtrack and some wild ideas. It's also clumsy, finicky to control, and visually all over the place. But there's something about the messy, uneven design that retains a strange allure for people like me.

Lets get one thing out of the way though: This is no Sonic Mania. If you're coming to Sonic Forces looking for a precise, well-designed platformer you're in the wrong place, and would be better off looking to Sonic

Mania or Mario Odyssey for your fix. Those games are meticulously crafted, nigh-perfect examples of their kind. Sonic Forces is, at best, a beautiful mess.

The story, because of course there has to be a story, is that Eggman (who has long since dropped his Robotnik moniker) has created a new device with which to overthrow the world. Sonic is defeated at the outset, taken captive by Eggman aboard the rebuilt Death Egg. Knuckles, Silver, Amy and co have been co-ordinating a resistance effort, but Eggman's robots have taken over the world in the 6 months since Sonic's defeat. Yes, there are clear echoes of the Sat AM Sonic the Hedgehog TV series here, and in a bizarre nod to the fans who have populated Deviantart with their own Sonic characters over the years, there's an Avatar creator that lets you make your own hero. This hero joins the resistance, and is sent off to rescue Sonic from Eggman's clutches.



Cue a mixture of 3D Sonic levels, where you'll be playing as either Sonic, or your Avatar, or both at once. The camera flicks between into-the-screen, Sonic Heroes style, and side-on Sonic Mania style. Neither of these ultimately works very well - the into-the-screen sections are fiddly to control and hampered by poor camera and physics, whilst the 2D sections are muddled by noisy backgrounds and strangely stop-start gameplay. Both types of play suffer from an abundance of abyss' to fall into, practically between every platform. All of this makes the gameplay frequently frustrating, though it is possible - eventually- to settle into a rhythm with the game and the controls. Even then, the level design will do its best to thwart your progress at every turn, and occasional glitches where Sonic lunges through a platform or catapults outside the level boundaries don't help matters.



As for the Avatar system - well, for a start, it's possible to make some absolute monstrosities with the game's fairly simple tools, and you only have to peek at the gallery of user-made abominations within the game to see some nightmare-inducing results. On the other hand, it's also possible to make some pretty cool-looking creatures, and deck them out with a dizzying array of different gear which gets unlocked as you progress through the game. They all control the same, irrespective of which race you choose, so you'll be running and jumping around, swinging off things with a grappling hook weapon, and blasting enemies with a Wispeon gun. Controlling the avatar never feels as fluid as controlling Sonic, but the customisation aspects do offer a touch of variety.

“IT’S FAST AND BOMBSTIC AND LOUD AND FULL OF ATTITUDE, ACCOMPANIED BY A CHEER-INDUCING SOUNDTRACK AND SOME WILD IDEAS”

Each mission is over pretty quickly, but there are tons of them to go at, and replayability is added through daily missions and objectives which you can complete to unlock new Avatar gear. There are hidden levels to find and SOS missions - where you have to replay a previous level to rescue someone or something (the game doesn't make it overly clear) without dying to succeed. Because the individual stages are so bite sized, it's easy to forget the most frustrating of them and move on to the more enjoyable levels, and the story rattles along with enough pace to keep you dashing from level to level. It's alarmingly compelling.

Is Sonic Forces a good game? Speaking purely objectively, I have to say no, though its certainly not a bad one. But there's something about it - whether it's the lively visuals, the stirring soundtrack, or the colourful cast of characters - that makes it far more enjoyable than it probably should be. Sonic Forces has many flaws, but none of them is stopping me from wanting to play more of it, and more of it, and more of it, until I have an S rank on every level and the perfect Avatar recreation of Bunny Rabbot.



6/10



Review by James Hall

WOLFENSTEIN II: THE NEW COLOSSUS

PC, PS4, Xbox One

What do you do with Wolfenstein? It's a question several developers have grappled with over the years - Muse Software's original followed by id Software's Wolfenstein 3D, before Gray Matter and Raven had their own stabs at the series. Machinehead's 2014 Wolfenstein was the first to go all-out for story, though, developing stoic protagonist B.J. Blazkowicz into a sympathetic hero character and thrusting him into an alternate history where the Nazis emerged victorious from WWII. Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus picks up (literally) where the previous game left off, with a mauled, critically injured B.J. being rescued by his allies.

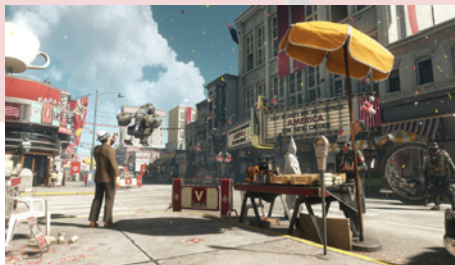


As you might expect from a Machinegames (formerly Starbreeze) release, Wolfenstein II is story-heavy, with lengthy, well-directed cutscenes bookending each mission, and plenty of downtime spent talking to allies and exploring the captured U-boat the resistance calls home. By this point in the

fictional timeline, the USA is completely controlled by the Nazis, so it's up to B.J. and co to form a proper resistance movement and unite rebel groups across the US. At the same time, Blazkowicz also has his own personal demons to contend with, and the game covers surprising ground in the number of themes it tackles, and especially in how thoughtfully it handles them. You'd expect white supremacy and racism to be covered, of course, but there are careful explorations of child abuse, depression and drug misuse threaded throughout, and even if they aren't all given a thorough examination they are at least handled with delicacy. The cast of characters is particularly strong, and you'll easily find yourself caring for the mismatched menagerie of miscreants Blazkowicz and co band together with. It's not all serious, and there are plenty of humorous interludes, action movie stunts and a hefty dose of weird satire to help the story along.

But wait- isn't Wolfenstein supposed to be a first-person shooter? Well, yes. And it is; the 18-or-so missions certainly offer plenty of Nazi-shooting to go around, and it's rarely been more satisfying; the action is frenetic and bloody, with meaty weapons that can sever limbs and evaporate enemies in clouds of blood and bone and showers of sparks. It sits somewhere between 2016's Doom and Chronicles of Riddick; stealth is possible but not required, health does not regenerate, you can carry all of the game's weapons at the same time, and there's a very visceral, weighty sense to the combat. It's also exceptionally hard.

even on the default 'Don't Hurt Me' there are some sections of the game that can prove frustratingly difficult, partly because the game is pretty poor at giving you visual feedback when you take damage. On higher difficulties some sections of the game become unbearable, and the act of repeating combat



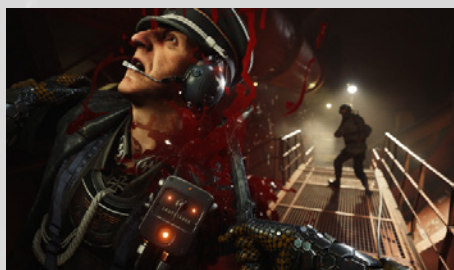
sequences details the narrative thrust of the game considerably. Given that most missions are pretty long, if you're playing the game through for the first time and just want to experience the story, we'd highly recommend dropping the difficulty down a couple of notches - you can challenge yourself with the game's harder difficulties later. The difficulty is exacerbated by how strangely fiddly it is to pick up items - some you'll pick up if you walk directly over them, but others you'll have to tap a button / key to collect, and there's a very narrow window for each item - this can make a life-or-death difference when you're trying to collect health in the middle of a pitched firefight.

“(THERE’S) PLENTY OF NAZI-SHOOTING TO GO AROUND, AND IT’S RARELY BEEN MORE SATISFYING: THE ACTION IS FRENETIC AND BLOODY, WITH MEATY WEAPONS THAT CAN SEVER LIMBS AND EVAPORATE ENEMIES IN CLOUDS OF BLOOD AND BONE AND SHOWERS OF SPARKS”

The enemies you'll fight are of limited variety; there are variously armoured versions of Nazi soldiers, heavy weapon wielding heavies that are best killed by using that old FPS staple of shooting them in the back, and a few larger robotic enemies, floating sentry drones, and so on. All look awesome, and put up a respectable challenge with pretty robust AI. The levels they inhabit are less successful; whilst you'll visit a number of gorgeously rendered environments, the layouts don't lend themselves to exploration well, and it's easy to get lost or lose your sense of direction thanks to an ineffective map and

uncooperative waypointing. There are few visual design cues to give you clear guidance on where the game expects you to go - I often found myself walking down dead-end corridors and empty rooms with sealed doors in Wolfenstein. Equally, whilst the actual act of blasting apart Nazis is immensely satisfying, thanks in part to punchy weapons and over-the-top gore, the game doesn't have much in the way of truly memorable set piece encounters - I can only think of a couple of really awesome action sections in the game that stand out in my mind. The more memorable moments are definitely relegated to the game's story, which undeniably Goes Places.

I played the game on a standard PS4, and the game hands in a rock-solid 60fps presentation. Graphical and texture detail is clearly pared back from what you'd see on the PS4 Pro, Xbox One X or PC versions of the game, but Wolfenstein II is still a fantastic looking title, and little details like environmental destruction and beautiful lighting effects go a long way to strengthen the game's appearance. The soundtrack is a mixture of moving orchestral beats and tense, wailing metal - all of which feels perfectly suited to the game. Special mention is due for the exceptional writing, voice acting and voice direction; the whole cast do an incredible job of bringing the characters to life.



Wolfenstein II might be a better story than it is a shooter, but it's by no means bad at the shooter part either: the action is rock solid, even if the level design doesn't always hold up its end of the bargain. As an experience, the New Colossus is bold, occasionally moving, often scathingly satirical, and has a strong heart beating at the centre of it. It's every kind of over-the-top in all the right ways, yet still manages to be respectful with its handling of difficult themes. There are things in here many games could learn from.

8/10



Review by James Hall

SINE MORA EX

Switch

Putting new twists on classic genres is rarely an easy feat, and doesn't always work - many genres have remained effectively stagnant for a reason, because they work as they are. But when Digital Reality and Grasshopper Manufacture brought us Sine Mora back in 2012, they revitalised the side-



scrolling shooter in some pretty ingenious ways.

At the basic level, Sine Mora EX is an expanded version of the original game, a side-scrolling shoot-em-up with clear inspiration from Japanese bullet hell shooters, an elegant dieselpunk aesthetic, and a weighty story breaking up the action. You'll battle the aircraft and ground forces of the Layil Empire across 7 primary stages and numerous boss battles, and experience a surprisingly complex storyline that takes place in two separate periods of time.

The most notable variation on the old formula is the time mechanic the game employs. Upon

starting each level you have a finite amount of time in which to complete the level and defeat the boss. Taking damage loses time, whilst destroying enemies adds time back. This makes for a really interesting risk vs reward system - do you sacrifice a couple of seconds of time by allowing yourself to be hit by an enemy if doing so gives you the chance to strike a boss's weak spot? Do you risk the time penalty by allowing yourself to crash into an enemy in order to grab that much-needed power up?

Tight time limits and an overabundance of enemy ordnance makes Sine Mora EX trickier than this system makes it sound, and you'll often find yourself swamped by enemies and firepower. Fortunately there are a variety of difficulty levels on offer for the less experienced - the default difficulty will make the game passably challenging for genre newcomers, whilst the higher difficulties are very much for bullet hell experts only. Whatever difficulty you



choose to play on, you'll be treated to a game that has a lot of variety on offer, with some thoughtful and beautiful level designs, interesting enemies, and spectacular boss battles. Naturally the bosses are a highlight - screen-filling and deadly, these battles often become multi-stage encounters with



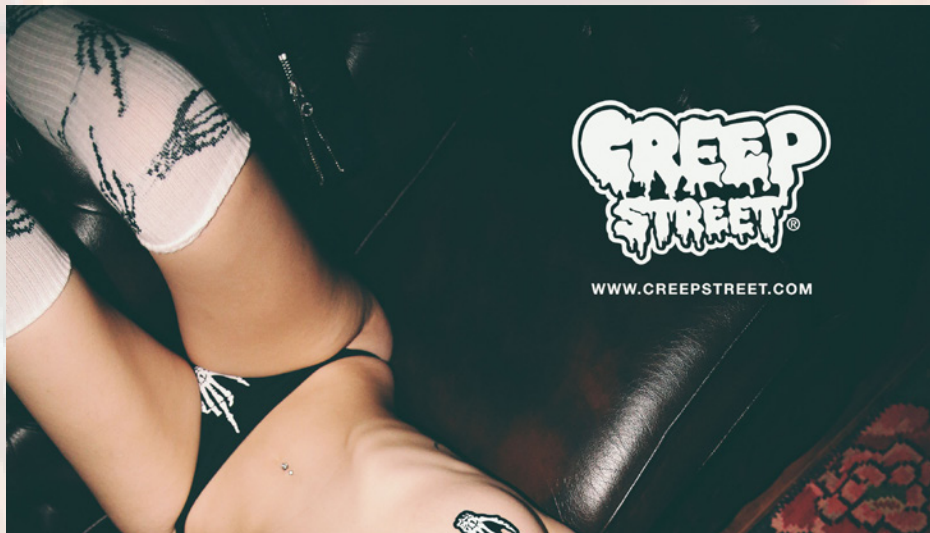
the camera angle switching throughout the fight, making great use of the gorgeous 2.5D landscapes. The Switch version runs absolutely hitch free, too, and looks great whether played docked or handheld.

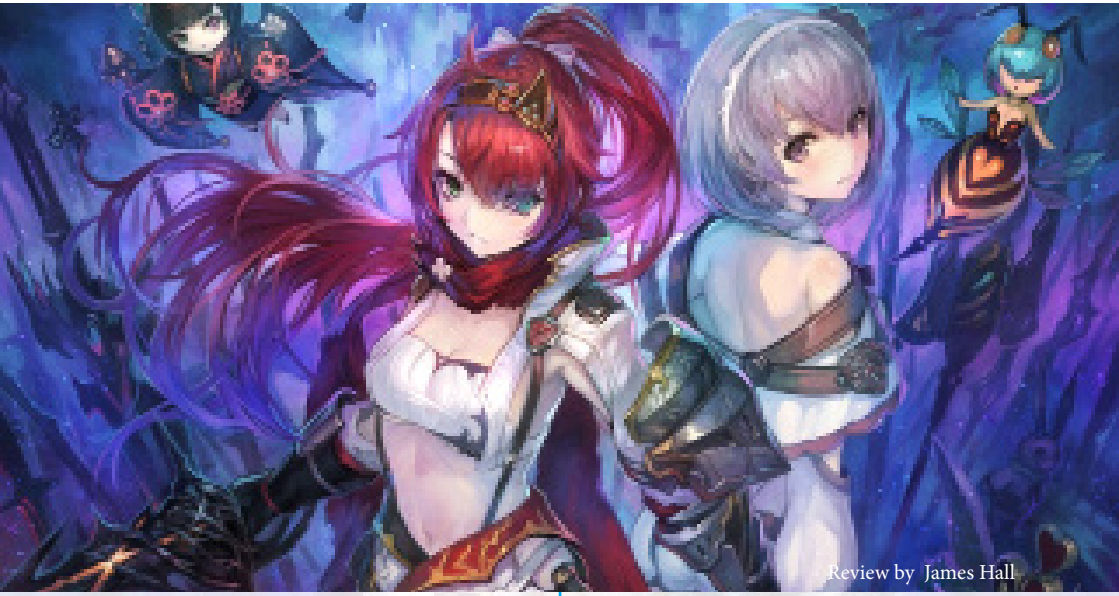
There's a bunch of game modes on offer, from the core story mode - essentially a tutorial, but heavy with cutscenes and dialogue, and whilst it tells an intelligent, sometimes powerful story, it's extremely difficult to follow the way it is presented in the game. If you're not in the mood for reading through swathes of text, you can opt for an Arcade mode, which strips out the cutscenes and grants you 3 continues with which to beat the game. Those seeking a greater challenge can also take on boss

training and a score attack mode, which challenges you to set a high score on a level with a single life. Whilst you could argue that these only really offer different ways of replaying the same content, the fact that the modes exist at all is impressive, and each poses enough of a subtly different challenge that they all prove worthy of some investment of your time. Different pilots and aircrafts offer further variety and allow you to customise your play style, and there's some incentive to improve as completing story stages on higher difficulties unlocks additional story content. Even though the game isn't all that long, there's plenty of content to go at, which makes the budget price point all the more palatable. Of course, with a game of this type, completion isn't the goal; it's all about getting the numbers higher and higher.

There's also a possibility that, if Sine Mora is your type of game, you might well have played it by now - it's been released on every platform since the PS3, even on iOS and Android. That's not to say it doesn't feel very much at home on the Switch, though, and whilst this EX release might not bring too much new to the table it the game retains its core appeal. Yes, it's tough, and yes, the story is cumbersome, but it's one of the finest, most well put-together shmups in recent years, and has something to offer even to people aren't normally fans of the punishing genre.

8/10





Review by James Hall

NIGHTS OF AZURE 2

PS4, PC, Switch

The first *Nights of Azure* was a perfectly serviceable action JRPG that very much flew under the radar, but it did at least have an interesting setup. Less than a year since that game got its Western release, Gust is back with *Nights of Azure 2*. And, surprise surprise, it's a perfectly serviceable action JRPG that is very much flying below the radar.



Things have improved since the first *Nights of Azure*, though. Combat is slicker, the story is better paced, the cutscenes better directed. It's still a game mired in anime tropes, with its cast of hypersexualised female characters and an uncomfortable tendency toward light ecchi, and the costume of protagonist Aluche goes beyond fanservice into pure comedy, but if you can look past all that, there's still a game to enjoy here.

The story takes place in the unlikely-named Ruined City of Erulem, in which a demon called the Nightlord ruined the world by unleashing foul creatures, Fiends, during the nighttime hours. The Curia, the erstwhile religious order of this world, takes charge of protecting the people from the Fiends, sending its agents out to do battle at night. Heroine Aluche is one such Agent, tasked with escorting her friend

Liliana, a priestess of the Curia. They soon discover that Liliana is due to be sacrificed to the Moon Queen, but are attacked by Fiends. Liliana goes missing, and Aluche is mortally wounded, forcing her other childhood friend Camilla to turn her into a half-demon in order to keep her alive. Adding a new twist is a strict time limit - you have a limited number of Nights in which to complete the story, as each night the moon advances through phases. If it reaches the new moon, then it's game over. There are a few ways to extend it, and it's pretty generous, but the limit does help keep things moving along.

Whilst the first game's combat focussed on using pokemon-like Servans to engage foes, *NOA2* pairs you up with other characters most of the time (though Servans still play a major role), and you can issue orders to party members to target or engage specific enemies or defend Aluche as well as unleash team-up attacks. The hack-and-slash style combat feels sharp and snappy, though the Switch version of the game we reviewed did struggle to keep a smooth framerate in some of the busier battles. Other than that, the visuals are very stylised, but the game looks pretty good.

Nights of Azure 2 is a big step up from its predecessor, even if it doesn't do much to broaden its appeal. The core combat at the heart of the game is far more enjoyable, and the faster paced story ensures that the game doesn't outstay its welcome. If you can look past all the jiggling boobs, there's a solid game to enjoy.

7/10



Review by James Hall

EVIL GENOME

(PC)

You have to give them credit for trying, at least. Actually, that's not fair - much of what developer Crystal Depths Studio has achieved with its first title, a combat-heavy Metroidvania, is pretty impressive. But it's clear that corners had to be cut with the budget when it came to the English translation, and the company appears to have used Google Translate. The results are, it's fair to say, mixed.



Fortunately, the game is still fairly easy to follow, thanks to it's clearly laid out HUD and familiar map layout, that comes complete with objective markers. What we can discern is that black-clad heroine Lachesis crash lands on a planet, and she and her AI drone buddy must find a way to repair their ship. The planet itself is a bit of a wasteland, inhabited by a few different factions with their own objectives, and naturally Lachesis gets roped into working for them.

Although the game describes itself as a 3D Metroidvania, this is actually a bit of a misnomer. The graphics are 3D, sure, but the action takes place on a strictly 2D plane, and whilst there's a very Metroid-y map system there's very little need to revisit previous areas and few new traversal abilities to unlock. The focus is squarely on the action, and there's a sprawling skill tree of powers and upgrades to enable you to customise your play style. Lachesis has a sword and a pistol, and can dart

around the levels with dashes and jumps, making for some very acrobatic combat, and there are a range of enemy types to square off against that encourage you to switch up your tactics. The combat feels remarkably solid and varied, though it is blighted by the occasional glitch and clipping issue.

The world itself feels well developed; there are loads of incidental background details, text logs to find and characters to talk to, though you'll normally come away from them more confused than enlightened. The world is pretty huge, and laid out well enough to encourage exploration, though technical issues mar the enjoyment; the visuals are decent but the game suffers from long load times and a bit of instability.

There's little that's truly outstanding about Evil Genome, and for the most part it plays things by the numbers, adding a few twists but stumbling a few times along the way as well. Still, this is a noble first effort, and the missteps don't get in the way of a mostly competent action platformer. It'll give you plenty of enjoyment for the £10 asking price, just don't expect to remember it when you're done.



5/10

